Training and Enterprise Councils and gender equality: An exploration of the potential and commitment of Training and Enterprise Councils to promote greater equality for women in training

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TRAINING AND ENTERPRISE COUNCILS AND GENDER EQUALITY: AN EXPLORATION OF THE POTENTIAL AND COMMITMENT OF TRAINING AND ENTERPRISE COUNCILS TO PROMOTE GREATER EQUALITY FOR WOMEN IN TRAINING

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For my parents, Allan and
Pauline, Nanna Heaton and Nell,
and for the memory of the
beloved Jessie W.

ABSTRACT

This is a study of the potential and commitment of Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) to promote greater equality for women in training. The results were generated by a national postal questionnaire survey of TECs in England and Wales, and by in-depth case studies of three TECs

The study begins with a discussion of women's participation in employment and training. It then provides an historical overview of women's participation in the UK's Vocational Education and Training system. Moving on, it explores the apparent paradoxes which informed the Government's creation of TECs, and the particular tensions this reform represents with respect to expanding the training opportunities of women. Taking this as it basis, the thesis moves onto consider the findings of the study's research. Having discussed these findings, it makes some concluding remarks.

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND AND AIMS

The last decade has heralded a series of structural reforms within vocational and education training (VET) in the UK; largely driven by the Conservative Government's prescriptive attempts to restructure education and training around the needs of industry (Gleeson,1989). Culminating in the formation of a network of local employer-led Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs)[1], the Government's creation of TECs evidenced its apparent faith in the ability of a market-led, or more accurately, a quasi market-led[2] training system to provide the solution to the training problems which have traditionally beset the UK's economy.

Coinciding with the Government's creation of TECs, increasing demands were being made to extend and improve women's training opportunities (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1991). Whilst one strand of this was informed by long standing social justice concerns, articulated by feminists and other groups interested in expanding women's training opportunities as part of a wider political project focused on

[1] The Government's creation of the TEC movement within the UK was confined to England and Wales.

[2] This description more accurately conveys the apparent contradiction which is embedded within the Government's creation of TECs. Whilst formed as employer-led, private companies, with a mandate to develop a market-led solution to the UK's

generating equality for women in all areas of society , a second strand was informed by more economistic and instrumental concerns.

Principal amongst the latter were concerns around the 'demographic time-bomb'. Much vaunted around the period in which TECs were formed, the demographic time-bomb hinged upon a growing awareness of the falling numbers of school leavers available to meet the UK's skill and labour market needs. Implying that employers would have to look outside the diminishing pool of school-leavers in order to meet their skill and labour needs, the implications of this suggested an apparent imperative to employers. In order to bridge the skill and labour market shortages which such patterns of demographic decline suggested, they would have to make efforts to develop the skills of women and other groups traditionally subject to labour market marginalisation (Employment Department, 1988).

Appearing to represent and recommend the pursuit of equal opportunity initiatives for women in training as an important economic strategy, this suggested an apparent prescription to TECs which the Government explicitly articulated within the advice it gave to them during their formation period. The proposition was that in order to safeguard against the threat of skill and labour shortages which demographic decline was perceived to represent, TECs should make efforts to develop the latent and under utilised skills potential of women

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training needs, TECs continue to receive the vast bulk of their budgets from state sources.

(Department of Employment, 1989 & 1990). As a corollary, and in addition to their mandate to promote a market-led approach to training geared toward eliciting a more pro-active response to training on the part of employers, it also seemed that TECs should aim to both embody and engender a more pro-active response to developing greater opportunities for women within this programme.

This research seeks to investigate the extent to which the latter recommendation has been realised within the initial period of TECs operational activities. Exploring the priority which they attach to developing greater opportunities for women within the VET they co-ordinate, the overall aim has been to develop a broad understanding of the commitment and potential of TECs to promote greater equality for the women within the training they co-ordinate. In tandem with this, the study also aims to provide some tentative insights into their potential to promote wider change in this regard, via their contacts with the employer population more generally.

RATIONALE

The rationale for the study was informed by three main and inter-related factors. Predicated on a recognition of the correspondence which exists between women's access to training and gendered patterns of labour market inequality (Wickham,1986; Cockburn, 1987), the first centred on the way in which developing greater equality for women in training might operate as a mechanism for promoting greater equality for women in paid employment. Whilst it is not the contention

of this thesis that the latter hinges wholly on the former, the need to generate greater equality for women in training as a mechanism by which to challenge the patterns of sexual segregation which inform women's inequality in employment has nevertheless been variously emphasised (Cockburn,1987; Wickham; 1986; Rees, 1992; Payne,1991). Moreover, although such accounts have tended to particularly emphasise the costs which the absence of such challenges are likely to incur on the part of women, it would seem that the economic costs it suggests with respect to employers' neglect and under-utilisation of women's skill potential is something which has increasingly been defined as problematic; for reasons noted above.

Taking this as its basis, the second reason for the research pivoted on a concern to explore some of the paradoxes embedded within the TEC project with respect to their potential to promote greater equality for women in training. Mapped at a general level around the apparent irrationality of relying on market-forces to deliver the UK's training needs, when the reliance on such forces in the past have been found to represent the problem rather than the solution (Sheldrake and Vickerstaffe, 1987), the potentially unsound nature of the Government's logic in this regard operated to condition a further contradiction. While providing ideological legitimation for the increasing withdrawal of public spending on training, insofar as it was assumed that employers would voluntarily step in to fill the breach, the apparent reluctance of employers to do so meant that TECs were effectively left to forge the Government's commitment to

a training revolution on ever diminishing public funds. The upshot of this assumption has contributed towards a disjucture between the rhetoric and reality of the TEC movement (Peck, 1991).

Furthermore, whilst these apparent paradoxes can be said to have potentially negative implications with regard to the quality and quantity of training which both women and men are likely to have access to, the premises which informed the Government's formation of TECs can be said to reflect a further layer of potential contradictions likely to have particular implications for women.

Far from being 'gender-blind', for example, the 'free' play of the market has been complicit within the (re)production of the gender-based labour market inflexibility which conditions women's inequality in training and employment (Walby, 1986; Cockburn, 1987; Rees, 1992). The extent to which a market-led approach to training can be relied upon to promote greater equality for women therefore needs to be scrutinised. Relatedly, the degree to which an employer-led training system promises to provide the basis upon which to realise such objectives requires investigation.

As employer-led organisations TECs could operate to facilitate positive attitudes towards the generation of greater equality for women in training and employment by attempting to realise one of the obligations set out in their operating agreements with the Department of Employment (DE),

which requires that TECs :

> shall use [their] best[3] endeavours to ensure equality of opportunity in respect of all its activities...and shall ensure that its Providers agree to promote equality of opportunity between all individuals in access to, treatment on and outcome from the training and enterprise programmes covered by this agreement (TEC Operating Agreement 1990, para 4.8, DE)

Moreover, as noted above, it would seem that there is a strong economic case for doing so, regardless of wider concerns around social justice. However whilst acknowledging their potential in this regard, a number of factors may operate to circumscribe this ambition. Reflecting the voluntaristic exhortations which have informed a key strand of the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA), the extent to which this has acted as a catalyst for change with regard to promoting a widespread commitment amongst employers to challenge women's labour market inequality is, as will be seen below, open to contestation (Dickens, 1989; MccGwire, 1992).

Furthermore, even if employers are persuaded of the economic case for developing greater opportunities for women in training and employment, a further set of problems may arise. Pivoting on the instrumental and contingent nature of the arguments upon which the economic case for equal opportunities tends to be predicated, and the tendency it exhibits to under-play structural factors, its ability to represent a significant challenge to pervasive patterns of

[3] . It is perhaps interesting to note here the change of emphasis which occurred in the Employment Department guidelines with respect to this between 1990 and 1993. Thus whilst in 1990 TECs were required to use their 'best endeavours to ensure equality of opportunity', by 1993 their were only required to use their 'reasonable endeavours' in this respect (quoted from TEC Operating Agreement, 1993, para 5.7, Department of Employment)

sexual segregation within training and employment, and to generate greater opportunities for all groups of women within this, is debatable (Dickens, 1989;Cockburn,1991).

Constituting the second strand of the study's rationale, the research thereby aimed to provide some insights into the implications that these apparent contradictions suggested with respect to conditioning the commitment and potential of TECs to generate greater opportunities for women within their operational remits. Moreover in generating such insights, the study aimed to realise the third rationale which informed it. Based on an awareness of the gap in the literature on women and training which the Government's formation of TECs generated, the third reason for the research was motivated by a desire to contribute towards bridging this important gap. However, in noting the study's rationale and objectives, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge some of the (de)limitations which circumscribed it.

LIMITATIONS

The nature of a project such as this necessarily involves conceptual and methodological (de)limitations, in addition to constraints of time and resource. At a conceptual level, the gender focus of study, or more specifically the priority it attaches to women, can be seen to have both strengths and weaknesses attached. On the plus side, it facilitates an in-depth analysis of the various factors which inform the reproduction of gender (in)equality within the training which TECs co-ordinate.

However the down-side of this is that it limits the scope of the research to explore the inter-play between this and differences of ethnicity, class and disability. By way of countering this, the study does make some limited attempts to note the implications of such inter-plays, particularly with regard to that between gender and class. In addition, some efforts are made to refer to other research which explores these areas. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that the time and resource limitations of the study precluded an in-depth and systematic engagement with such issues.

The timing of the study, the methods used to generate its findings, together with some of the problems encountered during the process of conducting the research, represented a further set of limitations. Some of the most salient of these are discussed in Chapter Four, which reports on the research methods used in the study. Nevertheless, it is perhaps important to note here that practical implications of conducting a research project such as this meant that all cases and situations could not be examined in enough depth to elicit sufficiently meaningful data. As a corollary, the cases and situations discussed were predicated on a process of selection, which inevitably precluded an investigation of other cases and situations. Moreover, the findings generated by researching the cases and situations selected are themselves a product of an interpretative exercise. As a corollary, this research does not claim to represent an exhaustive investigation of the area studied. However by exploring some of the issues discussed above, it does aim to

make a useful contribution to existing research on women and training, and more specifically, to provide some valuable insights into the potential and commitment of TECs to promote greater equality for women in training, together with providing some illumination of the factors which operate to circumscribe this.

THESIS AND OVERVIEW

Predicated upon an awareness of the correspondence which exists between the patterns of inequality which inform women's participation in training and the patterns of inequality which characterise women's position within the labour market, this thesis is premised on the importance of promoting greater equality for women in training. Taking this as its basis, and cognisant of the contradictions that the TEC movement would seem to suggest with respect to realising this objective, it aims to contribute towards a critical assessment of the potential and limitations which TECs represent in this regard.

In conducting the study, one of the initial problems encountered hinged on the wide range of literature which was relevant to it. In order to reflect this, the literature review that follows on from this Chapter in divided into two parts. Beginning with a consideration of the correspondence which exists between women's labour market inequality and their participation in vocational education and training (VET), Chapter Two shifts to an exploration of the role that efforts to promote greater equality for women in training

might play with respect to challenging the forms of inequality which characterise women's participation in employment. Aiming to emphasise the importance of promoting greater equality for women in training, the final section moves onto explore some of the explanations which have been developed to account for women's inequality in training and employment, in order both to illuminate the factors which have informed this, and the obstacles these represent with respect to generating greater equality for women in these areas.

Building upon the arguments developed in Chapter Two, Chapter Three provides an historical review of the patterns which have tended to characterise women's participation in the UK's VET system. Arguing that such patterns have tended to reflect and reinforce pervasive processes of exclusion and segregation, the discussion then turns to a consideration of the extent to which these processes were challenged within the various reforms which were instituted within the UK's training system from the mid-1960s onwards; and the factors which operated to circumscribe such challenges. Bringing the discussion up-to-date, the Chapter concludes by outlining the logic which informed the Government's creation of TECs, and the various paradoxes this reform suggests, with respect to securing the priority which the UK attaches to training at a general level. More specifically, there is an examination of the priority this reform attaches to securing commitments to generate greater equality for women within this programme.

Chapter Four provides a discussion of the research methods and strategies used to generate the results presented in this thesis. Following on from this, Chapter Five reports on the findings of the first prong of the study's research strategy, which involved the administration of a postal questionnaire survey to all 82 TECs in England and Wales. Exploring a range of factors with respect to their internal organisation, funding and training priorities, this chapter also includes a discussion of the efforts TECs had taken to expand women's training opportunities within the various training programmes they co-ordinated. Representing a mapping device by which to assess the priority which the TEC movement as a whole appeared to attach to generating greater equality for women within their operational remits, the Chapter also raises a number of issues which are explored in greater depth in the Chapters which follow on from it.

Chapter Six is largely concerned with a discussion of background information generated by the second prong of the study's research strategy, which involved case studies of three different TECs. This provides a context against which to locate the findings reported in the two chapters which follow on from it.

Chapter Seven begins with a discussion of the forms of training which each of the three TECs co-ordinated for the unemployed. It provides some selective insights into the varying levels of priority they attached to promoting women's access to such forms of training, and the extent to which efforts were being made to encourage women's

participation in non-traditional forms of training within this area of provision. Moving onto a discussion of the various initiatives which each TEC specifically targeted towards women, the Chapter concludes by fore-grounding the different levels of priority each manifested to promoting greater opportunities for women within the substantive forms of training they currently co-ordinated, and planned to co-ordinate in the near future.

Moving on, Chapter Eight attempts to provide insights into some of the factors which appeared to have informed the different levels of priority which each of the three TECs attached to expanding women's training opportunities. The Chapter explores issues around the various ways in which each TEC had sought to secure and promote the representation of equal opportunity concerns for women within the different levels of their internal organisation. The discussion aims to provide some insights into the relationship which existed between this and the substantive commitments they exhibited in this regard with respect to the training they co-ordinate. In addition, the Chapter will attempt to contribute towards an illumination of the inter-play which existed between such internal structures and processes and various external considerations.

Finally Chapter Nine presents some concluding remarks on the thesis and attempts to draw out some major points around the factors which operate to promote and delimit the potential of TECs to generate greater equality for women in training. In

doing this, it aims to generate a platform upon which to suggest a number of key recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

GENDER INEQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING: CORRESPONDENCE AND EXPLANATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the relationship between women's participation in paid employment and their participation in vocational education and training (VET). Beginning with an overview of the former, the discussion moves onto a consideration of the latter, in order to explore the correspondence which exists between the two. This will be used to indicate the role that equal opportunity interventions in training might play in challenging women's labour market inequality. Finally, a selective consideration of the various explanations which have been developed to account for women's inequality will be outlined, in an effort to identify the various structures and processes which operate to impede the realisation of gender equality in employment and training.

WOMEN'S LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION[1]

The number of women participating in the UK's labour market has risen dramatically during the post-war period. Currently

[1] Whilst various statistical sources will be cited in this section, it is important to note that official labour market statistics are informed by a whole set of definitions and assumptions which operate to privilege men's paid employment. Consequently, they can provide only partial insights into the nature of women's labour market participation. See Rees, 1992:13-18 for further discussion of this point.

comprising 44% of its workforce, figures relating to the economic activity of men and women indicate female activity rates increased from 63% in 1979 to 71% in 1993 whilst the economic activity of men fell from 91% to 86% over the same period (Employment Gazette, November 1993:484-486).Despite this process of increasing feminisation, women's labour market participation continues to be characterised by inequality. Women are overwhelmingly concentrated in low-paid, low-skilled forms of employment. On an average hourly basis, women are paid 20% less than men[2], whilst comparisons between the relative pay of men and women in manual and non-manual occupations reveal greater discrepancies. Thus the relative earnings of women in non-manual occupations as a whole is 67% of the pay received by non-manual men, whilst female manual workers earn 72% of their male counter-parts. (ibid:519). Moreover these pays differentials are further exaggerated when women's part-time earnings are taken into account. Over 40% of women are employed on a part-time basis, with Walby's (1989) calculations from the **New Earnings Survey** indicating that the average earnings of women part-timers are around one quarter less than full-time female employees, and over two-fifths lower than male full-time workers[3].

In part informed by the way in which women and men tend be concentrated in different types of employment, industrial analyses indicate that women tend to be located in a

[2] Historically, women's average hourly pay relative to men increased slightly following the introduction of the Equal Pay Act. After 1975 the proportion fluctuated around 74% up to 1987 but has increased on a yearly basis since then. Employment Gazette, November 1993: 519).

relatively small number of areas, while occupational statistics reveal the extent to which women working in different industries are likely to be concentrated in a narrow range of occupations. The vast majority of women work in service industries, which accounts for 83% of female paid workers compared to only 56% of men, whilst figures relating to part-time employment indicate women part-timers to be even more concentrated within the service sector. In constrast, only 13% of all working women and 8% of female part-timers work in manufacturing, compared to 28% of men (ibid:489-490).

Occupational figures illustrate that women predominate in health, education, retail, assembly, clerical work and within the welfare and personal service occupations. For example, women outnumber men by two to one in clerical work and by three to one amongst sales and retail workers. Conversely, men outnumber women by 68 to one in the construction trades and by 43 to one in skilled engineering occupation. Largely absent from the technical sphere, women are also significantly under-represented within management and administrative occupations, accounting for only 11% of such positions compared to the 19% occupied by men, whilst less than 5% of female part-time workers are employed as managers (ibid.).

Furthermore, within higher paid levels of employment, women remain concentrated in a relatively small number of industries, with 35% of female managers and administrators

[3] For further discussion of implications of full-time/part-time divide, see Hakim (1993).

being employed in the distribution, catering and hotel industries, whilst about 84% of professional women work in 'other services' fields like government, education, health and welfare. By way of comparison, this figure is almost twice that of professional men employed in the same industries (ibid.:491). Whilst even greater levels of sexual segregation are apparent within the finance and banking sector, which accounts for only 9% of professional women despite the fact that the industry employs almost 20% of all people employed in professional occupations (ibid:490-491).

Evidencing entrenched patterns of sexual segregation within the labour market, greater analytic purchase on such gendered patterns of participation is provided by Hakim's (1978 & 1979) distinction between vertical and horizontal segregation. The latter type of segregation describes a situation whereby men and women are employed in different occupations, whilst the former refers to the tendency for men to be employed in higher level grades within the same occupation. Analyses of the horizontal distribution of men and women in 17 socio-economic groups (SEGs) indicate that horizontal segregation actually increased during the 1970s, with considerably more men working in SEGs which were at least 90% male than had been the case in 1971. Similarly, over the same period, significantly more women were found to be working in SEGs which were over 70% female (Bagguley and Walby, 1988)[4].

[4] See reference cited above re. foot-note 3 for further discussion of this point.

Likewise, while vertical analyses suggest that attempts to characterise all female employees as low-skilled and/or secondary workers are over-simplistic (Walby, 1989), women nevertheless remain massively under-represented in higher level SEGs. For example, whilst the numbers of women in management have increased, not only has such expansion primarily taken place in the female dominated services sector, it has also largely been accounted for by the employment of female managers in more junior posts. As a corollary, higher levels of management continue to be male preserves, with women comprising only 10% of senior managers and 6% of company directors (Bagihole,1994:11)[5]. Despite some well publicised examples of women entering male dominated occupations and/or managing to break through the much vaunted glass-ceiling, it therefore remains a truism that such examples represent the exception rather than the rule.

WOMEN'S INEQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING: POINTS OF CORRESPONDENCE

Representing a key factor in shaping women's labour market inequality, the tendency for men and women to be concentrated in different kinds of employment has been particularly emphasised by various feminist analyses of employment. These studies suggest that such gendering processes constitute a key obstacle in the development of

[5] For further discussion of women's under-representation at board and senior management level, and the factors which inform this, see Institute of Management (1992) **The Key to the Men's Club** and Howe and McRae (1991) **Women on the Board.**

greater labour market equality for women (Walby, 1989; Collinson et al.,1990; Cockburn; 1991).

Until relatively recently, the role that training has played in shaping such gendered patterns of labour market inequality has represented a neglected area. However, a number of studies have lately been produced which aim to bridge this gap by providing insights into the correspondence which exists between women's participation in training and their participation in employment. (Wickham, 1986; Cockburn, 1987; Payne, 1991; EOC, 1991 and 1993; Rees, 1992; Brine,1992 & 1995; Buswell, 1992).

The Equal Opportunity Commission's (1991) report, **Women and Training: A Review**, provides comprehensive evidence on the way in which women receive a much smaller portion of the nation's VET training 'cake' than men. This report offers valuable insights into the patterns and characteristics which inform women's participation in VET within both state training programmes for the unemployed, and job-related training for employees. It also indicates qualitative differences in terms of the 'ingredients' of training which men and women receive.

Women, for example, were found to be under-represented on both the Government's youth and adult training schemes for the unemployed, comprising only 40% of trainees on the Youth Training Scheme (YTS, now Youth Training) and 31% on Employment Training (ET). In tandem with this, the types of training received on YTS and ET were found to reflect pervasive patterns of horizontal sexual segregation evident

within the labour market. Over half of all female ET trainees were located in administrative and clerical occupations, whilst a further fifth received training in health, community and personal service occupations. Likewise young female YTS trainees were found to be disproportionately concentrated in clerical and administrative occupational training, which accounted for one in three of all young women in YTS. In contrast, more than a quarter of young male YTS trainees were located in the construction/civil engineering occupational group, compared to less than 5% of young women represented in this and the other two occupational groups (mechanical engineering and vehicle repair) which collectively accounted for the bulk of male YTS trainees (ibid:13 & 49).

In concert with perpetuating patterns of horizontal sexual segregation, the different treatment accorded to young men and women YTS trainees within the same occupational training has further been found to prefigure patterns of vertical segregation. An example of this is provided by Cockburn's (1987) study of sex-stereotyping within the YTS, which includes her observations of a clerical/office skills YTS training provider. Involving two forms of provision, one Secretarial Skills and the other Business Studies, she found that whilst outnumbering men by almost two to one, only a quarter of the scheme's female trainees were on the Business Studies course compared to three quarters of its male trainees on the same course. Moreover, of the three remaining male trainees, none were pursuing the Secretarial Skills course but were instead studying for other business related qualifications.

Impacting on the work-placement training which each trainee received, a tendency for the scheme's female trainees to be placed in unspecified clerical positions like 'office worker' or 'typist' was further identified and contrasted with male trainees, who were overwhelming channelled into substantive placements like 'salaries' or 'insurance' clerk. The effect of these combined processes meant that whilst ostensibly located within the same occupational grouping, the outcomes which the provider produced were profoundly gendered, in that the scheme's female and male trainees were destined to move on in their 'sex-determined ways, she to the type-writer and he to the desk' (ibid:123). Thus whilst not assuring the career progression of it male trainees, the Business Studies course and work-placements which they pursued made it more likely that they would escape the secretarial ghetto which the scheme promised to prefigure for the majority of its female participants.

Based on findings which suggest access to training is positively correlated to educational attainment, grade of job, hours worked, occupation, industry and size of employer, women employees have also been found to be variously disadvantaged in job-related training. Drawing on unpublished data produced by the 1989 **Labour Force Survey**, the EOC (1991) noted that female employees with 'A' level qualifications or above were more likely to have received recent training than men with equivalent levels of qualifications. However because the proportion of such women is significantly lower than that of men, the down-side of this correlation is that a higher number of women than men have no qualification and thereby

have very restricted access to training, whilst male employees with relatively low levels of qualification ('O' level or CSE), actually have greater access to job-related training than female workers with equivalent qualifications(ibid:28).

In part reflecting the positive correlation between access to training and educational qualifications, access to training was also found to be grade-related, with professional and managerial staff receiving 56% of training compared to skilled and semi-skilled workers, 40% of whom received training between 1986 and 1987 (**The Funding Survey**,1987 cited ibid:28). Given the relatively small numbers of women employed at professional and managerial levels, and the tendency for female workers to be concentrated in occupations defined as low or unskilled areas, women's access to training is therefore further limited by their under-representation within higher grades of employment and their disproportionate location in lower grade work.

Moreover this tendency is further compounded when women part-timers are taken into account, in that they are significantly less likely to have access to job-related training than either female or male full-time employees. Thus, in addition to revealing a tendency for women to receive less training than men in a range of occupations, which included female intensive occupations like clerical and related work, data produced by the 1989 **Labour Force Survey** indicated that female part-timers received less training than either male or female full-time employees in each of the occupational areas examined. Confirming the tendency for female part-timers to

be excluded from job-related training, analyses of the 10 industries which employed most women in 1989 also indicated an overwhelming tendency for all women employees to receive a lower proportion of training than men. Thus in all ten industries, which ranged from retail to recreational services, more men were found to have experienced training than women employed in the same industry (cited ibid:30-33).

Finally, the trend for women employees to work in small enterprises militates against their participation in training. For example, data produced by Booth (1990) from the 1987 **British Social Attitudes Survey** indicated that working in enterprises which employed 25 or more employees increased women's chances of receiving training. Reflecting a tendency for smaller firms to provide less training for its employees as a whole, with a quarter of the smallest enterprises (employing 10-24 workers) providing no training at all in the period 1986-1987 (**Funding Survey**, 1987, cited in Deloitte Haskins and Sells, 1989), this tendency when combined with Booth's findings, has particular implications for women's access to training, given their disproportionate concentration in small firms. Thus in 1989, 40% of full-time women worked in enterprises that employed 24 or less employees, whilst 51% of female part-time workers were employed in such small enterprises.

On the basis of this brief review, it is apparent that important points of correspondence exist between women's inequality in the labour market and their participation in the various forms of VET which are co-ordinated within the UK. Reflecting and reinforcing pervasive patterns of

horizontal segregation, the Government's YTS and ET programmes overwhelming operate to channel its female and male trainees into traditionally 'male' and 'female' occupations, whilst the former has been shown to prefigure vertical forms of sexual segregation by providing gendered training trajectories within the same occupational grouping (EOC,1991; Cockburn, 1987). Moreover, when in employment, women's access to training has been shown to be delimited by the very factors which tend to characterise women's labour market inequality; a factor which represents something of a vicious circle. That is, whilst it could be argued that female part-time workers, women employed in low grade occupations[6] etc. are most in need of training if they are to achieve greater equality with men in employment, it appears that such groups of women are those most likely to be excluded from job-related training. Indeed, it seems to be somewhat irrationally the case that even within industries which collectively account for the bulk of female workers, the men in these industries are nevertheless more likely to have access to training than women employed in the same industries (EOC,1991). Moreover, when employers' cut back on training, their training of women seems to be one of the first things to be sacrificed (Green, 1991).

[6] It is important to note that an important caveat relates to this argument which is informed by the way in which definitions of skill are socially constructed, with such definitions tending to be defined against women. That is, despite the objective capabilities embedded within various forms of women's employment, skilled work tends to be characterised as something that women don't do. This point will be briefly explored below but more in-depth discussions are provided by Phillips and Taylor (1980), Thompson (1983), and West (1990). By way of extension re. gender implications of flexibility debate, both with respect to numerical and functional flexibility, see Chapters by Jenson and Walby in Wood (1989). Also see Dickens (1991) **Whose Flexibility? Discrimination and Equality Issues in Atypical Work**.

TRAINING AS A CHANNELLING DEVICE AND A MECHANISM OF OCCUPATIONAL CLOSURE

Establishing a correspondence between women's labour market inequality and their participation in VET does not evidence a determining relationship. Extensive research currently exists which suggests that a key problem for certain groups of women centres not so much on their lack of training but is instead conditioned by employment structures which define uninterrupted and full-time labour market participation as the 'norm'. This is a definition which effectively privileges male patterns of employment and thereby fails to embody the different needs which women may bring to the workplace. The tendency for women returners to experience downward occupational mobility after a 'career break' (usually prompted by marriage or more specifically by motherhood) has been well documented and largely explained in terms of them re-entering work on a part-time and/or temporary basis (Dex, 1987; Rees,1992).

This tendency is also apparent amongst highly qualified professional women, in that whilst ostensibly retaining their occupational status, part-time working in these areas tends not to be considered particularly relevant to the linear progression routes suggested by the organisational parameters which circumscribe them. As a corollary the occupational progression of professional women returners tends to be stunted in comparison with their male colleagues. For instance, whilst noting that the number of women employed as doctors was broadly similar to men, Allen (1988) indicates that female doctors were more likely to have

experienced extended periods of employment at 'practioner' level, particularly during periods of part-time employment. Revealing similar trends amongst female pharmacists, Crompton and Sanderson (1990) therefore suggest that patterns of stunted occupational progression for such women are not so much informed by differences in professional training and qualification but are instead generated by organisational imperatives which privilege male working patterns over those exhibited by women.

Operating to suggest that women's labour market inequality cannot wholly be explained in terms of the gendered processes which inform women's participation in VET, these findings do not detract from the important role that the gendering of training plays in conditioning women's labour market inequality. Representing a powerful channelling device and mechanism of occupational closure, access to VET provides a pathway into skilled occupations whilst also offering a means for occupational progression (Cockburn, 1987; Wickham, 1986). Conversely, being excluded from, or marginalized within, training restricts occupational choice, at both entry and progression levels (ibid.). Noting the way in which the converse scenario most accurately characterises women's participation in VET, Wickham underlines the potential role that generating greater equality for women in training might play in improving their occupational status, whilst also indicating the basic premises necessary if such potential is to be realised. Wickham recognises that:

> Training is one of the ways used to monitor entry into occupations. You can't become an engineer, a carpenter or a car mechanic without some form of training. Once

> in a job you often can't get promoted without some form of training

And she thus argues:

> It is therefore very important that women have access to forms of training which will give them opportunities for either entry or promotion. It is equally important that the forms of training offered do not reproduce or reinforce the present structure of gender inequalities in employment (1986:2-3)

Acknowledging the important role that training plays in terms of both facilitating occupational entry and promoting occupational progression, a range of studies on women and training have therefore emphasised the need to challenge the way in which it currently functions to channel women into traditionally 'female' occupations, and to restrict their access to higher level skills training (Cockburn,1987; Rees, 1992; Payne,1991).

Moreover evidence already exists on the benefits which such challenges are likely to achieve. For instance, Payne (1991) has indicated the way in which increasing women's access to high quality skills training in traditional areas of female employment has some potential to challenge patterns of low pay amongst women workers. Furthermore, although large scale evidence on the potential benefits arising from specific initiatives aimed at training women in non-traditional areas is difficult to locate by dint of the piecemeal and often unrecorded nature of such programmes, the problems of quantifying such outcomes when subject to scrutiny (Pollert and Rees,1992)[7], and by the ambiguity which has been found to

[7] Tending to fall within the rubric of Positive Action (PA) programmes, the absence of a data base of PA initiatives does, as Pollert & Rees (1992) note, impede large scale and systematic analyses of the outcomes that they produce. Further, as their own study of 3 PA programmes indicates, assessing the impact of the training initiatives for women which each included was very difficult. Thus whilst benefits in terms of assertiveness, confidence and networking with other women were apparent, the role the training played in facilitating any promotion which ensued was different to evaluate.

inform those which have been researched (Brine,1992 & 1995)[8], the importance of such efforts is nevertheless underlined by the unequal occupational trajectories which the absence of such large scale interventions is likely to prefigure. This point is underlined by Buswell's (1992) argument that patterns of sexual segregation within YTS effectively consign young women trainees to a future of low paid work. Both reinforcing and expanding upon this, Cockburn's research into sex-stereotyping on the YTS thus led her to conclude that unless married with a firm commitment to challenge gender stereotyping in training:

> All the indications are that YTS presages a future inequality... [which represents a] channelling process that produces the two tone, pink and blue pattern we [see] in the adult world of work...Once she has said 'yes' to hairdressing or typing, even on YTS, the young woman trainee can be pretty sure that in ten years' time she will be earning only £6 of £7 for every £10 earned by the young man who said 'yes' to photography, engineering or business studies...She will have sealed her own fate as the future over-worked and under-paid combination of worker/mother (1987:11-12).

Although not representing the panacea to the problem of women's inequality in employment, the current gendering of training does seem to contribute towards the (re)production of pervasive patterns of sexual segregation within the

[8] Thus in her study of EC funded initiatives aimed at training women in non-traditional areas, Brine argues that this has involved a focus on training women in relatively low-skilled manual occupations, at the expense of training women in both higher skilled 'female' occupations and in high skilled technology occupations. As a result, rather than challenging the gendering of training, she suggests it has contributed to a re-gendering process, which hinges upon keeping women in low status, low paid occupations and impeding their potential to compete equally with men in the technological future. Also see Rees (1992) for discussion of limitations around ESF training programmes for women (particularly Chapter 4).

labour market. As a corollary, it is apparent that training, or more specifically , efforts to promote greater gender equality in training, does matter to women. Furthermore, given recent concerns about the much vaunted 'demographic time-bomb'[9] (Employment Department, 1988), which suggest that employers need to look beyond recruiting school leavers if they are to meet industry's skills needs, it could be argued that extending women's training opportunities is not only important on social grounds but also appears to make good economic sense. Thus the under-development of women's skills potential which current patterns of labour market inequality in part evidences suggests a massive under-utilisation of their abilities and productive potential; the continuity of which, when married to demographic considerations, is something the UK can ill afford if it is to meet its needs for a more highly skilled workforce which some economic surveys and forecasts suggest (Smith, 1990; Institute of Employment Research, 1989). Emphasising the way in which various factors have conspired to place education and training high on the national agenda at both a political and business level, the EOC thus spells out the economic case for developing equal opportunities for women in training and the implications which flow from this:

> The coming of the Single European Market, increasing international competition and the accelerating impact of the new technologies have awakened Britain to the fact that it faces a major skills challenge in the 1990's and beyond. There is general agreement that our success will

[9] Referring to a tendency for the number of school leavers to decline over the last decade, the upshot of this is that the UK is confronted with an ageing workforce. As a result, it is argued that employers will need to look beyond this declining pool of young labour market recruits, and to given more priority to training women and other groups who have traditionally been marginalised within their training efforts, if they are to meet industry's skill requirements.

> depend to a large extent on developing and utilising the skills, talents and creative energies of every woman and man in the present and future workforce in Britain....nevertheless there remains a need for a planned and co-ordinated national programme which sets equal opportunity training targets, monitors and evaluates progress, and above all rigorously encourages the implementation of an education and training strategy that is generally relevant and accessible to women (1991: Foreword).

However, whilst it can be argued that efforts to extend women's training opportunities are important on social and economic grounds, the question remains as to why women's participation in training and employment is characterised by inequality in the first place.

EXPLAINING GENDER INEQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Various explanations have been developed to account for women's inequality in employment. Whilst tending to extend beyond an exploration of the role that training has played within this, they nevertheless provide valuable insights into the complex and deep-rooted processes and structures which have informed the pervasive patterns of sexual segregation which are apparent in both training and employment. Given space limitations and that detailed summaries of these explanations are available elsewhere (see Walby, 1986 & 1990), the following discussion aims to provide a selective review of some of these, in order to explore the respective insights they provide into why training is gendered.

Neo-Classical and Human Capital Explanations: Gender Inequality as a Calculated 'Choice'

Committed to the inherent rationality of the 'free-market', neo-classical theory holds that any form of labour market rigidity impedes the effective functioning of the economy. As a corollary, when confronted with the apparent irrationality of gender based rigidities, analysts working within this tradition have sought to indicate the rationality embedded within such patterns by focusing on aspects of supply and demand.

Exemplars of this can be found in the human capital theories developed by Becker (1957 & 1965) and Mincer (1962, 1966 & 1974), which tend to favour supply-side analyses which lean heavily on functionalist interpretations of gender and the family (Rees, 1992). Pivoting on essentially voluntaristic arguments, human capital theorists explain the apparent irrationality of gender inequality in the workplace in terms of women's greater commitment to the home and family. Because women are said to invest more of themselves in the home and family, it is argued that women effectively choose not to accumulate the same levels of human capital (defined as the abilities they can sell onto employers like education, training, qualifications, motivation, and work experience) as men.

Seeming to provide a rational explanation for women's relative low pay which also takes into account women's differential access to training, this voluntaristic analysis has also been extended to account for horizontal patterns of

sexual segregation. Thus pervasive distinctions between 'male' and 'female' occupations are said to arise from the calculated choices which women make to enter occupations which are less likely to penalise interrupted working patterns (Mincer and Polachek, 1974). The upshot of these different strands with regard VET is therefore that women 'choose' not to train in the same way as men, that they seek less training and when they do participate in training, they are likely to 'choose' training in traditional areas of female employment; arguments which have led some analysts within this tradition to conclude that female occupations can be characterised as both ' requiring lesser amounts of training' and 'menial' (Polachek,1976).

Although this might be regarded as a reasonable caricature of women's relationship to training and employment, in that women do have less access to training, are more likely to train in occupations in which women workers predominate and are disproportionately concentrated in employment which is defined as low status work, the extent to which such theories represent an adequate explanation is questionable. As noted above, the tendency for women returners to experience downward occupational mobility, for example, suggests many women re-entering the labour market are employed at levels below that which their previously accumulated levels of 'human capital' would rationally suggest should be the case (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990). Likewise, and by way of reinforcing this point, research by Trieman and Hartmann, reported by Walby (1990), indicates that the general empirical association which human capital theorists make

between the earnings of male and female workers, and the different levels of human capital they accumulate, does not hold up.

Similarly, citing research by England, Walby (ibid.) indicates that the assertion that women are less likely to be penalized when re-entering traditionally 'female', as opposed to 'male' occupations, is ill founded. Thus, whilst women's anticipation of a career-break has been shown to play an important role is shaping the occupational and training options which they pursue, with 'good' jobs for relatively well qualified women in teaching and the medical professions coinciding with those which facilitate greater flexibility in terms of part-time and temporary forms of employment, evidence suggests that such flexibility incurs a cost. While opting to train as a teacher or a nurse may be perceived as offering greater flexibility to women in terms of part-time and temporary working, the trade-off for this is likely to involve loss of promotion and even demotion in some cases (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990; Rees,1992). Moreover, such expectations and perceptions operate to particularly restrict the choices of working-class young women, who tend to be confronted with limited options of training in relatively low paid areas like clerical and retail work, in order to both accommodate longer term needs for greater flexibility in anticipation of a career break, and shorter-term desires focused around conforming with idealised notions of femininity (ibid.;Buswell:1992).

Predicated upon the assumption of a perfectly functioning labour market, a key problem with human capital theory hinges

on both its technicist definition of skill and the essentially voluntaristic analysis it develops. In essence, women's labour market inequality is explained in terms of their 'choice' not to accumulate the same levels of human capital as that of male workers, in order to invest more of their energies in the family. With specific reference to the issue of training, this assertion is difficult to reconcile with evidence pointing to a massive demand for increased training opportunities amongst women, a point which also belies the assumption that women have equal access to the opportunities available to men.

Operating to obliterate the various struggles which women have engaged in to achieve greater equality with men inside the workplace, this assumption also fails to recognise the way in which such struggles have been counter-acted by the mobilisation of both employers and some groups of skilled men (Walby,1986; Cockburn,1983). No account is therefore given of the way in which women's exclusion from, and marginalisation within, VET has represented an important political strategy within such counter-offences, nor to the tendency for concepts of skill to be socially constructed within such counter-offences, with skilled work being defined as something that women do not do (Cockburn, 1983 & 1987; Wickham, 1986; Phillips and Taylor,1980).

While theoretically and empirically flawed, the assumption that women are less committed to accumulating the skills and abilities they can sell on to employers is significant in that such assumptions appear to inform employers' attitudes. For instance, in their attempts to incorporate demand-side

factors within their human capital analysis, Chiplin and Sloane (1976 & 1982) suggest that employers screen by sex in order to simplify the range of factors they might potentially take into account within their recruitment and training strategies. Thus in their later study they note the tendency for work to be sex-typed and indicate the way in which this involved indirect gender signalling, with specifications like apprenticeships being used to demarcate male areas, whilst female areas were signalled by reference to factors like typing skills and appearance. While in their earlier research, they argue that employer perceptions that women are less committed to employment, by dint of their assumptions around women's greater investment in the family, operates to impinge on women's training opportunities, with the uninterrupted and full-time patterns of employment which male workers tend to exhibit being perceived as the most rational mechanism through which employers might recoup their costs of investing in job-related training.

Marxist and Dual Labour Market Perspectives: Women's Inequality as a By-Product of Capital Accumulation or Industrial Efficiency

Contributing to a more structuralist analysis, the priority which Marxist explanations give to exploring problematics of capital and class have tended to generate varying degrees of 'sex-blindness' (Hartmann, 1979). Despite this, some attempts have been made to explain patterns of labour market sexual segregation within this paradigm, as evidenced by Beechey's

(1977) early attempt to gender the Marxist concept of 'the reserve army of labour' thesis.

Based upon the argument that employers use women's primary association with the home and family in order to constitute female workers as a reserve army of labour, which can be called upon and disposed of as and when the need arises, Beechey's analysis has some resonance with those developed by human capital theorists. Both Chiplin and Sloane's, as well as Beechey's analysis, can be used to indicate why women's access to training is characterised by inequality. The former's argument, for instance, that employers are less likely to invest in job-related training for women because they perceive the recouping of these costs might be jeopardised by interrupted working patterns; when married to Beechey's recognition of the benefits which employers might accrue by being able to draw upon women as a relatively low-skilled labour market reserve, suggests a mutually reinforcing process. Being defined as a greater training risk, woman's likelihood of being consigned to secondary forms of employment is therefore increased, whilst the gains which employers receive with regard to the numerical flexibility facility which ensues, might be perceived by employers as out-weighing the potential costs resulting from the under-development and utilisation of women's skills and abilities.

Despite this, a number of problems are apparent within Beechey's explanation. It provides, for example, little insight into why women and men tend to be concentrated in different kinds of occupations. Furthermore her empirical

identification of women as a reserve army of labour, which resonates with dual and segmented labour market conceptualisations of women as a secondary labour force (Barron and Norris, 1976; Reich et al., 1980 cited in Thompson,1983), does not bear scrutiny. To illustrate, Barron and Norris (1976) argue that women's labour market inequality can be explained in terms of employers' attempts to divide the labour market into a primary and secondary sector. Primarily motivated by efforts to retain and reward more highly skilled and organised groups of employees, they identify five characteristics which employers perceive as particularly relating to female workers which generate a tendency for them to employ women within the secondary sector. Included amongst these are their distinctive social identity, their dispensability, a low interest in training and economic rewards and an antipathy to workplace solidarity.

The problems which beset attempts to characterise women as a secondary labour force are noted by Beechey (1986) herself in her later critique of dual labour market theory, in which she indicates that many women workers do not fit easily into the category of secondary sector employment. Furthermore, in addition to the empirical limitations of Beechey's earlier arguments, her attempts to gender the Marxist reserve army of labour thesis is theoretically limited, in that it tends to focus on women's relationship to the economic system, at the expense of focusing on their relationship to men, and to assume that the latter can be understood in terms of the former (Hartmann, 1979). Thus whilst providing insights into

the interests that employers may have in restricting women's access to training and perpetuating their labour market inequality, it could be argued that this is achieved at the expense of illuminating the role that key groups of working-class men and male dominated trade unions have played in reproducing and reinforcing such patterns of gender inequality. This criticism can also be extended to segmented labour market theories, which argue that women's consignment to the secondary sector reflects a 'divide and rule' strategy aimed at preventing worker solidarity which might otherwise arise from the homogenisation of labour, in that such 'divide and rule' strategies are explained primarily in terms of the benefits which accrue to capital at the expense of exploring those which accrue to male workers.

A further problem with Marxist perspectives pivots on the deterministic form of analysis they develop, and the tendency for this to over-shadow an exploration of the way in which class based processes are informed by gendered subjectivities. For instance, Braverman (1974) argues that the development of work in capitalist society is characterised by strong de-skilling imperatives, as employers seek to increase profits by exerting greater control over the labour process; the result of which is that objective definitions of skill and training become increasing empty categories[10]. Indicating the way in which such de-skilling imperatives provided the basis upon which capitalist production could diversify, he further provides an account

[10] Issues around the labour process debate have provided the subject for much, and often complex debate. See Thompson (1983), Wood (1989), and Knights and Wilmott (1990) for examples, each of which contain chapters exploring the gender dimensions of this debate.

for the expansion of key sectors which have come to employ women like clerical, retail and service work, even though this cannot in itself be seen to provide an adequate explanation of how such sectors have come to employ women (Thompson, 1983).

Providing a valuable framework within which to take issue with the objective and taken for granted nature of skills labels, a number of problems are nevertheless apparent within Braverman's analysis. Thus whilst he provides a basis upon which to explore the relative and ideological nature of skill as a social construct, he does this by positing a more accurate or absolute definition of skill, which is bounded by notions of 'craft mastery' and time spent in training. Braverman argues that:

> The concept of skill is traditionally bound up with craft mastery …[with] the break-up of craft skills and the reconstruction of production as a collective or social process having destroyed the traditional concept of skill

He therefore goes on to suggest that this is in part evidenced by the reduced periods of training which workers need to undertake in order to qualify for skilled status:

> With the development of the capitalist mode of production, the very concept of skill becomes degraded…and the yardstick by which it is measured shrinks to such a point that today the worker is considered to possess a 'skill' if his or her work requires a few days' or a few weeks training, several months of training is regarded as unusually demanding, and the job that calls for a period of six months or a year…inspires a paroxysm of awe. We compare this with the traditional craft apprenticeship, which rarely lasted less than four years and which was not uncommonly seven years long (1974:443-44).

The apparent trade-off between time spent in training and the level of skill attained which he posits is problematic on a number of accounts. Thus as Childs (1992) indicates, the acquisition of objective skill competencies within time-served craft apprenticeships could not be assumed but instead often had to be actively sought by apprentices requesting to be moved around the shop-floor and/or undertaking continuing education at their own initiative and expense. Whilst more fundamentally, Braverman's tendency to reify time served processes of 'craft mastery' can be said to obscure the extent to which such processes were concerned with factors other than the transmission of objective skill competencies. Specifically it impedes an appreciation of the way in which time-served apprenticeships represented a means of constructing certain areas of employment as 'male', and thereby provided a 'rite of passage' through which young boys were inducted into masculine work cultures (ibid.; Cockburn, 1983). Relatedly, the priority which Braverman attaches to objective processes of de-skilling within the workplace does not provide insights into the gendered processes of contestation which such imperatives generated. These processes evidenced the increasing politicisation of concepts of skill as powerful groups of working men acted to exclude women from, or segregate them within, employment and training in order to safeguard their own labour market advantage against capitalist threats of homogenisation(Cockburn, 1983; Walby, 1986; Phillips and Taylor, 1980).

The upshot of Braverman's analyses is thus that he shifts from a reification of traditional craft training and skill to

a position of privileging employer distortions of categories of skill, and overlooks the way in which both of these have been mediated by the effects of male working-class struggles to safeguard their labour market status at women's expense. As a corollary, counter-tendencies to de-skilling and homogenisation, involving the constant (re)creation of "men's" and "women's" work, within which gendered patterns of training are implicated, are ignored. The implications of Braverman's analysis, together with Beechey's earlier analysis, and those developed by dual and segmented labour market theorists, is thus that the theories of the sexual division of labour at work which they suggest represent 'an immaculate conception' which is unsullied by the patriarchal interventions which men have manifest within the workplace, which read that 'women fill certain inferior places provided by capitalism, but do so in a way for which they are destined by the shackles of family life' (Cockburn, 1981:110).

Dual Systems Theory: Women's Inequality as an Inter-Play of Capital and Patriarchal Relations.

In contrast to Marxist analyses, dual systems theories suggest that an adequate explanation of women's labour market inequality can only be provided by exploring the inter-play between sex-gender systems and economic systems, as they are currently manifest in the respective forms of patriarchy and capitalism. Rather than explaining women's inequality in employment and training as a by-product of capital accumulation, analysts working within this framework focus on the articulation between these two systems in order to

explore the way in which patriarchal and class relations combine to generate gender inequality.

Dual-systems theory represents a broad and quite complex area of analysis and debate. The relationship which different dual-systems analysts posit between the two systems also tends to vary. For example, some suggest that the two systems are inter-twined and mutually inter-dependent (Eisenstein, 1979), whilst others have argued that capitalism and patriarchy are analytically separate, with each system being seen to have an independent effect (Mitchell, 1975; Hartmann, 1981). This latter category is further subdivided between analysts who argue that patriarchy and capitalism operate within different spheres of society, and those who suggest that patriarchal and capital relations articulate within all spheres of society. For instance, Hartmann (1981) represents the latter perspective, whilst Mitchell (1975) evidences the former in that she suggests that patriarchy is confined to the general level of ideology, and that capitalism relates to the economy. In addition, some analysts have argued that capitalism and patriarchy share identical interest (Hartmann, 1981), whilst others have suggested that the interests of each can, at times, conflict (Walby ,1986 &1990).

Although noting the value of Marxist analysis, Hartmann argues that the sex-blindness of such analyses necessarily limits their potential to explain women's inequality. Thus both by way of acknowledging the value of Marxist analyses and emphasising the need for these to be expanded in order to take account of the impact of patriarchal relations and

structures, she suggests:

> Capitalist development creates the places for a hierarchy of workers…[However] traditional Marxist categories cannot tell us who will fill which places. Gender and racial hierarchies determine who fills the empty places. Patriarchy is not simply hierarchical organisation, but hierarchy in which particular people fill particular places. It is by studying patriarchy that we learn why it is women who are dominated and how (1981:18)

Acknowledging that patriarchy pre-dated capitalism, Hartmann (1981) suggests that the development of capitalism within an established patriarchal system involved a process of historic mutual accommodation; the culmination of which was represented within the hegemony of the 'male breadwinner', structurally enshrined within the concept of the 'family wage', and the notion of separate spheres which this embodied. Men thereby became primarily identified with the public sphere of work and constructed as the main wage earners, while women became primarily identified with the private sphere of the family, with their participation in paid employment being defined as peripheral.

Hartmann's analysis operates to emphasise the way in which the political agency of working-class men was complicit within the (re)production of women's inequality. Whilst acknowledging the benefits which capital accrues by being able to draw upon women as a low-paid workforce, she thus argues that the struggles which working-class men engaged in to exclude and subordinate women within the labour market were motivated by patriarchal concerns, geared towards challenging the potential threat which capitalism was seen to represent. In particular, she suggests that such struggles, and the patterns of occupational segregation by sex which

they generated, were motivated by an attempt to counter-act capitalism's threat to create a 'free' labour market; a threat of competition which not only promised to jeopardise men's privilege within the labour market but which also, as a corollary, promised to undermine established patterns of male control over women's labour within the private sphere of the family. The upshot of this process, and the basis of the accommodation which it suggests between patriarchy and capital, is that women's low pay maintains a distinction between 'men's' and 'women's' work, a factor which both safeguards men's labour market advantage and ensures women's dependence on men, whilst also benefiting capital's search for cheaper production.

Underlining the patriarchal interests embedded within this process, Hartmann indicates the structures through which this was mediated, the way in which gendered patterns of training are implicated within this, and the implications this has for both men and women. Arguing that 'lower wages for women are enforced by job segregation in the labour market,' she thus suggests that such segregation is:

> Maintained by unions and management as well as by auxiliary institutions like schools, training programmes...For most men, the development of family wages, secured the material base of male domination in two ways. First, men have better jobs in the labour market and higher wages than women. The low pay which women receive in the labour market both perpetuates men's material advantage over women and encourages women to choose wifery as a career. Second, women do housework, child-care , and perform other services at home which benefit men directly. Women's home responsibilities in turn reinforce their inferior labour market position (1981: 22).

While Hartmann's analysis is valuable in that it highlights the role that working-class men have played in shaping

women's labour market inequality, she has been criticised for under-playing the conflict and tension which exists between the two systems (Walby, 1986).

Walby (ibid.) defines patriarchy as an inter-related system of social structures through which men exploit women. She argues that these structures include the state, male violence and sexuality, domestic labour and paid employment. However, the analysis she develops places particular emphasis on the latter two structures, not only to indicate the articulation between patriarchy and capitalism but also to foreground the tension which exists between them. Arguing that the private sphere of the family represents a patriarchal mode of production through which men are able to expropriate and exploit women's domestic labour, Walby suggests a conflict between such patriarchal interests and the competing demands which capitalism makes with regard to exploiting women's labour in the public sphere of paid employment.

Moreover, and in contrast to the explanations developed by human capital analysts, Marxists and dual labour market theorists, which tend to characterise women's inequality in employment as a artefact of gendered relations within the family, Walby suggests that women's position in the family is largely determined by the patterns of sex segregation which characterise their position in employment and not vice versa. Registering her disagreement with the 'theories of those who argue that it is women's position in the family which leads them to choose a lesser form of engagement in paid work than men', she therefore suggests a more fruitful line of enquiry

pivots on the issue of:

> Why do women suffer such appalling conditions of work in the family as many do? Why do women marry on such terms? The answer is that the options for most women in paid work are not much better, because men have usually been successful in excluding women from the better forms of work. Hence housework is as good as anything else a woman is likely to get (1986:248)

Walby provides a valuable theoretical framework within which to explore the way in which patriarchal processes and structures are embedded with the labour market itself, and the potential conflict which exists between these and capitalist imperatives. Furthermore, her historical analysis provides insights into the various strategies which organised groups of working-class men have used in their efforts to safeguard their market status, and why some of these efforts were more successful than others.

In noting the strenuous efforts which groups of skilled male workers exhibited during the 19th century to exclude women from paid employment, Walby illustrates the way in which the success of such patriarchal labour strategies were mediated by the relative power of the trade unions concerned, balanced against employers' interests in exploiting women as a low paid workforce. For instance, acknowledging the relative triumph of patriarchal interests within engineering crafts, she argues that this was facilitated by the traditional craft basis of the male dominated trade unions within this trade, which adopted an exclusionary strategy which turned upon denying women access to apprenticeship training in engineering. Contrasting this with clerical work, once the province of male clerks but now representing a key area of female employment, she suggests this reflects a process of

compromise between patriarchy and capitalism; a compromise which operated to prefigure the segregationalist patriarchal labour market tactics which Walby suggests tended to supercede the exclusionary strategies prevalent during the 19th century. Thus unable to counter employers' preference for women as a relatively cheap labour resource, male clerks are said to have adopted a strategy of grade segregation; a strategy predicated upon an effort to safeguard their own employment status against threats of female substitution by segregating female workers within relatively lower grades of clerical work.

Although providing a more nuanced and historically sensitive definition of the concept of patriarchy, which avoids some of the monolithic and ahistorical charges made against previous formulations, Walby's analysis can be criticised both in terms of its determinism and its over-emphasis on social structures at the expense of a consideration of agency. Thus, whilst emphasising the merits of Walby's framework, Collinson et al. (1990) have argued that she jettisons an economistic theory of capital exploitation only to replace it with one hinging upon patriarchal economism. By way of countering this tendency, they suggest it is equally important to explore the way in which patterns of gender inequality in the labour market, and the asymmetrical power relations which this expresses, are 'reproduced, rationalised and resisted through the social practices and agency of men and women in both positions of domination and subordination', if an overly determinist analysis is to be avoided (ibid.:52).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the forms of inequality which characterise women participation in paid employment and VET. Indicating a correspondence between the two, it has been argued that the gendering of the latter represents an important mechanism in delimiting women's occupational careers, at both access and progression levels. Whilst acknowledging that the promotion of greater gender equality in training does not represent the panacea to women's labour market inequality, it has thereby been suggested that such efforts nevertheless represent an important strand within feminist agendas aimed at challenging women's inequality both inside and outside the workplace.

The chapter concluded with a review of the various explanations which have been developed to account for women's inequality in training and employment, in order to explore the strengths and weaknesses which each of these suggested. For example, explanations developed by human capital theorists were found to be limited by the essentially voluntaristic and functionalist analyses developed, whilst Marxist explanations were found to be circumscribed by their privileging of class over gender inequality, with the latter tending to be perceived as an artefact of the former. Operating to foreground the strengths of dual systems analyses, which hinge upon efforts to illuminate the way in which women's inequality is conditioned by the inter-play of capitalist and patriarchal structures, it was nevertheless

argued that such explanations needed to engage more fully with questions of agency if an overly deterministic analysis was to be avoided.

Taking this as its basis, the following Chapter provides an historical review of women's participation in training within the UK. Noting the way in which this has been characterised by patterns of exclusion and segregation, it aims to indicate the structures and processes through which such patterns have been mediated, rationalised and resisted.

MOVING TOWARDS A RECOGNITION OF THE 'HUMAN FACTOR' IN FEMALE FORM?: AN HISTORICAL AND THEMATIC REVIEW OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN TRAINING

INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to indicate the ways in which the UK's system of VET has operated to reproduce patterns of gender inequality in training. In doing this, the Chapter presents a selective historical review of women's participation in training.

Historically dominated by the principle of voluntarism, the post-war period heralded increasing State intervention in the UK's system of VET (Sheldrake and Vickerstaffe, 1987). Beginning with a brief sketch of the period leading up to the State's increased involvement in the UK's training system, the discussion primarily focuses on the post war period, and culminates with a discussion of the Government's creation of TECs. The aim of this is to explore the various structures and processes implicated in shaping women's inequality in VET. An attempt will also be made to briefly explore the challenges which have been made to this by the (re)emergence of feminist movements concerned with generating greater equality for women. Specific emphasis will be given to the

degree to which such concerns were codified within the UK's anti-sex discrimination legislation, in an effort to assess the extent to which this, and economic arguments around the need to extend women's opportunities in training, can be said to have promised the conditions upon which to develop greater equality for women in this area.

VOLUNTARISM AND THE APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM: THE OPERATION OF THE 'FREE MARKET' AND THE EMERGENCE OF A 'MALE ARISTOCRACY OF LABOUR'

From the mid 19th century, when it became clear to both industrialists and politicians alike that Britain no longer held the prerogative over industrial hegemony, concern has been expressed over the failure of the UK's VET to meet the skills needs of its economy (Perry, 1976). Despite this, the perception that the State should not intervene in training remained ingrained until well into the 20th century (ibid., Sheldrake and Vickerstaffe, 1987). Reflecting the predominance of laissez-faire ideologies, this unwillingness to intervene in training extended to both men and women. Predicated on the assertion that the free play of market forces allowed each individual to compete on equal terms, notions of individual liberty were thereby privileged over those of social equality within an apparent faith in the 'rationality' of the market to fulfil the UK's skills needs.

Nevertheless, the training outcomes produced during this period were profoundly gendered. This gendering process was informed by the co-existence of pervasive gender ideologies,

which held that women's proper place was in the home, and the structural interests which underpinned them (Cockburn, 1983; Walby, 1986; Wickham, 1986). During this period and beyond, the apprenticeship system represented the main mechanism for meeting the country's training requirements. Geared towards the production of a relatively small percentage of skilled workers, it operated to deny vocational training to the vast majority of unskilled workers. Representing a mechanism for the transmission of objective skills (Beechey,1982), the apprenticeship system also embodied an important political dimension. Thus it operated to control occupational entry and maintain skill privileges in the face of management attempts to de-skill certain jobs (ibid.; Cockburn, 1983).

This provided an important means by which male dominated trade unions attempted to limit managerial prerogatives in the workplace in order 'to modify certain aspects of the fundamentally asymmetrical relationship of power involved in capitalist productions'(Penn, 1985:132). The extent to which such restrictive trade union practices operated against the interests of employers is however debatable. For instance, Lee (1979) argues that such restrictions might well have been encouraged by employers because:

> perpetuating the idea of union resistance provided a cover for over-reliance on old methods of training and for cheap labour practices. In short, one cannot overlook the possibility that apprenticeship restrictions might have crumbled much faster had they not been readily tolerated, even encouraged, by large numbers of employers (Lee,1979:35-36)

Whilst Wood (1985) indicates the way in which the system operated as a management device geared towards coping with worker resistance through the fragmentation of the workforce;

an argument which can be seen to resonate with those emerging from the segmented labour market theorists referred to above.

The upshot of this is that both trade unions and employers were implicated in maintaining such exclusionary strategies, with the fragmentation of labour which ensued being constructed not only around class but also around gender difference. This point is well illustrated by Cockburn's study of the print industry, in which she observes:

> For every apprentice compositor with his foot on the bottom rung there were a hundred likely lads clustered around the ladder. Equally to the point, there were one hundred and one girls who were not considered likely at all and for whom the ladder was out of sight (Cockburn,1983:17).

Emphasising the role that male dominated trade unions played in excluding women from print apprenticeships, she argues that this was not only motivated by efforts to safeguard against the threat of dilution but was also informed by a desire to maintain men's patriarchal advantage both inside and outside employment (ibid.). This defence of patriarchal interest ran through the various strategies which were deployed against employer encroachments throughout the history of print trade union activity, as the movement struggled to uphold the association of skilled work with male workers. Similar arguments are developed by Walby (1986) in her discussion of the way in which male dominated trade unions in engineering operated to exclude women from apprenticeship during the 19th and early 20th century, in order to maintain their patriarchal advantage both inside and outside the workplace.

The construction of the apprenticeship system as an essentially male preserve maintained and reinforced the 'labour aristocracy' status of key groups of male workers at the expense of women workers, who were conventionally excluded from entering such skilled trades (Barrett, 1980). As a corollary, it operated to deny skilled status to women. Moreover, whilst the economic exigencies around the 1st and 2nd World Wars placed a premium on women's labour market participation in the absence of male workers, and thereby opened up training for women in traditionally male preserves, the respective post-war settlements which ensued heralded periods of massive demobilisation. This pattern of demobilisation was particularly apparent with respect to the 1st World War, the culmination of which was heralded by married women specifically being exhorted to return to their 'proper' role within the family, in order to vacate forms of employment which were conventionally defined as male preserves (Walby, 1986; Braybon, 1981).

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY, 'UP-SKILLING' IMPERATIVES, AND THE 1964 INDUSTRIAL TRAINING ACT

The 1950s and early 1960s witnessed an increasing disillusionment with the principle of voluntarism as the adequacy of both the quality and quantity of the UK's industrial training provision was increasingly called into question (Sheldrake and Vickerstaffe,1987). Based around increasing perceptions of the implications of technological change and international competition, and the imperatives to 'up-skill' its workforce which these factors were seen to

underline, the efficacy of market forces in contributing to the skills formation of workers was therefore increasingly called into question.

This coincided with a period in which more women were participating in the workforce and heralded the emergence of notions around women's dual role (involving paid work and the family). However such notions appeared to be overwhelmingly applied to middle-class women within the policy arena. For instance, the Crowther Report (1959) on the educational and training needs of 15-18 year olds spoke of the increased probability that middle-class women would seek to combine motherhood with a career. In noting this, the Report emphasised the need for such women to receive better educational and training opportunities in order to prepare them for such dual roles. Likewise, the Robbins Report (1963) emphasised the need for a better qualified female workforce in order to meet skill demands in the expanding primary education and white collar sector (cited Deem, 1981:36-37). However, such concessions to women's dual role did not extend to working-class young women, whose education and training remained primarily defined as preparing them for marriage and child-rearing. This point is evidenced by the debates which culminated in the 1964 Industrial Training Act.

The 1964 Act represented the first of what was to be a series of state interventions in training. It empowered the Minister of Labour to create tripartite Industrial Training Boards (ITBs). These Boards were mandated to impose a levy

upon all firms[1], and to pay grants to those which maintained adequate levels of trainees and training standards (Sheldrake and Vikerstaffe, 1987). However, despite the fact that women had increased their share of the workforce from 30.8% to 32.4% between 1951 and 1961; a percentage increase which more that doubled during the 1960s (Bain and Price,1972 cited Cockburn, 1983:42), discussions around the provision of training for women were notable by their absence from the debates which led up to the Act (Perry, 1976). Moreover, when considered, such needs were effectively dismissed. Thus whilst containing a small section on training opportunities for young women, the Carr Report's (1958) assessment of the adequacy of industrial training for young workers concluded that because most young women would marry they therefore did not need training (cited Wickham, 1986:20-21).

Reflecting the predominance of functionalist interpretations of gender and the family (ibid.), the eclipsing of working-class women's training needs which the 1964 Act represented meant that conceptualizations of training remained defined in terms that were almost exclusively male. Thus although operating to increase the amount of training industry provided (Sheldrake and Vickerstaff, 1987), the 1964 Act had little or no impact on improving the training opportunities of working-class women. For instance, although a total of 15 million workers were covered by the 27 ITBs which were in operation by 1971, most of these covered industries which contained few women workers (Wickham, 1986).

[1] .Firms below a certain size were exempted.

Continuing to provide the main route into high skilled occupations for the working-classes, the apprenticeship system remained a male preserve. During the period in which the 1964 Act was implemented, 35% of male school-leavers went into apprenticeships compared to only 6.5% of their female counter-parts. Of these young women, the majority entered hairdressing apprenticeships, and were thereby destined to follow an occupation dominated by women and characterised by low pay (Clarke, 1962 cited in Finn, 1987:46). Furthermore, six years after the implementation of the Act, women remained largely absent from training in traditionally 'male' occupations, with 1970 figures suggesting that they accounted for only 110 of apprenticeships in engineering compared to the 112,000 which were occupied by young men (Wickham, 1986:26).

Important insofar as it appeared to concede the apparent limitations of the market to contribute towards the skill formation of the UK's workforce by acknowledging the need for state intervention in VET, the 1964 Act had therefore done little to facilitate greater equality for women in training; a point which the TUC underlined almost 10 years after its introduction by arguing that the Act had had a negligible impact on extending women's training opportunities. In noting this, the TUC's criticism and recommendations, which it made with respect to the Act, nevertheless embodied an ambivalence towards the issue of gender inequality. This was an ambivalence which can perhaps be said to have been fostered by a desire to safeguard the labour market advantage of its male members, while at the

same time making some concessions to the increasingly prominent role women were playing in the labour market. Thus whilst recommending that ITBs should set aside funds to encourage firms to develop positive action programmes aimed at encouraging women to train in non-traditional areas, its primary criticism of the current arrangements which ITB's made centred on the observation that the bulk of training places were in traditional male areas, like construction and engineering, and were therefore 'clearly appropriate only to men' (House of Commons, 1973 cited ibid:25)

The imperatives around the need to 'up-skill' the UK's workforce, when married to the increasing disillusionment with voluntarism which occurred during the 1950s and 1960s, can be said to have generated a more pro-active response on the part of the State with respect to its assumption of greater responsibility for the provision of VET to its workforce. However the expression of this can be said to have been articulated around existing differences of class and gender. Thus whilst some concessions were made to the educational and training needs of middle-class women, the effective marginalisation of working class women's training needs, which the 1964 Act appeared to enshrine, can be said to have contributed to an entrenched process by which concerns to promote greater equality for such groups of women remained consigned to the periphery of the UK's training agenda.

SEX DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION , THE MANPOWER SERVICES COMMISSION (MSC) AND THE ECLIPSE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

The concerns expressed by the TUC with regard to the apparent failure of the 1964 Act to facilitate more and better quality forms of training for women represented one strand within a more general criticism of the Act. This criticism turned on arguments that it had not gone far enough, and had thereby failed to incorporate wider sections of the UK's workforce within its training remit. However the policy re-think that occurred during the early 1970s was also informed by other concerns. Principal amongst these was the antagonism which employers expressed towards the grant/levy system, which they perceived as an unwarranted and unduly onerous form of state intervention (Sheldrake and Vickerstaffe, 1987). Combining to produce a further and important shift within the UK's training policy, these concerns culminated in the 1973 Employment and Training Act. This heralded the creation of the corporatist Manpower Services Commission (MSC), and a modification of the grant/levy system (Perry,1976).

Representing an attempt to pursue a national training policy, while at the same time removing some of the responsibility for training from employers, the creation of the MSC seemed to represent a further acknowledgement on the part of Government with respect to the inability of the market to generate the skilled workforce which its economy needed. Appearing to accept the inevitability for more active State engagement in the UK's VET systems, the creation of the MSC coincided with the enactment of anti-sex discrimination legislation which emerged during the first half of the 1970s;

a coincidence which potentially promised to accord greater priority to women within the UK's training agenda.

The codification of concerns for equality within the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) represented the culmination of a long period of agitation by feminists, and other social movements, concerned with the promotion of greater equality for women (Carter, 1988). Nevertheless, this legislation was informed by essentially liberal underpinnings and thereby tended to overlook the structural interests which informed women's inequality. Essentially construing sexual discrimination as an expression of market irrationalities informed by the presence of prejudiced attitudes, the minimalist forms of intervention they allowed and recommended can therefore be characterised as representing a 'tinkering'/ 'tidying-up' approach to equality aimed at up-holding the 'game rules' of free-market competition (Jewson and Mason, 1986; Rees, 1995). This in turn hinged on the assertion that the principle of equal opportunity exists when:

> all individuals are enabled freely and equally to compete for social rewards...[and] requires [policy makers] to ensure that the rules of competition are not discriminatory and that they are fairly enforced (Jewson and Mason, 1986:13)

As a corollary, the protection given under the SDA was extended to both women and men, despite that fact that women are the main victims of sexual discrimination. Embodying a symmetrical and individualist approach to what is in reality an asymmetrical and inherently social problem (Dickens, 1989), the Act has thus been criticised by those advocating a maximalist perspective. Representing a more fundamental

critique and challenge to differentials of power which exist between different social groups, the maximalist analysis thereby concentrates on the 'outcome of the contest rather than the rules of the game' (Jewson and Mason,1986:315). In doing this, it effectively problematises the outcomes free market processes produce, and set:

> no particular store by the outcomes of free market processes. Rather it believes that there are independent standards of human dignity and moral worth which must take precedence [and which] may be derived from ideologies such as Marxism, feminism or 'black power' (Jewson and Mason,1986:315).

Informed by such counter ideologies, maximalist approaches to equal opportunities therefore advocate more radical or 'tailoring'/ 'add-on' interventions like positive action or positive discrimination programmes geared towards compensating for the structural biases which are seen to be inherent within free market processes[2].

Tending to eschew such maximalist approaches to equality, the largely minimalist underpinnings of the UK's anti-sex discrimination legislation can be said to have contributed to the fact that over 30 years after the passage of the legislation, women's inequality remains ingrained both inside and outside employment (Dickens, 1989; Rees,1992). Nonetheless, exemptions granted under Section 47 of the Act did allow the use of such mechanisms in training in order to promote the participation of both women and men in non-

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[2] . It is useful to note here that maximalist recommendations have in turn been subject to critique. Based on a recognition of the way in which the policy recommendations which they advocate are likely to be inserted within existing hierarchies and status groups, and the competition this suggests with respect to the struggles which different disadvantaged social groups exhibit in their efforts to gain a foot-hold with such hierarchies, it has been suggested that such strategies in isolation can operate to further fragment and disempower social groups already subject

traditional areas of employment. In addition, it also allowed provisions to be specifically targeted towards groups defined as having special needs, like women returners. Deploying both of these mechanisms within the training programmes it developed, the MSC did initiate some interventions geared towards increasing women's training opportunities in the initial period of its operations. However, as will be seen below, these were limited.

There were two distinct periods to the MSC's history, the first part running from 1974-1978. Not yet confronted with the task of dealing with the implications of the deepening recession which was to confront it during the second part of its life-span, these years were characterised by relatively modest interventions aimed at addressing the apparent lack of fit between the supply of labour and skill needs, interventions which involved an increasing emphasis on training (Ainley and Corney,1990). Initially comprising of two executive arms: the Employment Services Division and the Training Services Division, 1976 witnessed the publication of a report entitled 'Training Opportunities for Women' by the latter division. The report identified a demand for vocational training from women, and emphasised the inadequacies of training provision then available to them. It further suggested that there were strong economic, social and legislative justifications for providing women with more and better quality forms of training (Wickham,1986). Moreover, these calls were further underlined by the MSC's evaluation

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to marginalisation. See Cockburn (1989, 1991) and Rees (1993, 1995) for further discussion of these points.

of the Special Programmes it co-ordinated for the unemployed, which indicated that only a quarter of young women benefited from the employment provision under its Job Creation Scheme, and that they tended to receive less VET than their male counterparts on the Scheme(MSC,1977 & 1979 cited Cockburn, 1987).

Appearing to signal the MSC's awareness of the need to attach greater priority to the training needs of women, this awareness had been formally articulated within its earlier decision to treat women's training needs as a special priority in 1975. This decision coincided with the introduction of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act (SDA), which, as noted above, allowed for mechanisms by which such priority might be pursued. Using the positive discrimination clause to fund TESS, a small-scale initiative for young women technician engineers, and MSC also used the special needs proviso of the Act to develop Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) courses.

Funded and administered by the Training Services Division, WOW courses were targeted towards women-returners and aimed to facilitate their transition back into paid employment. Courses were organised on both a part-time and full-time basis and lasted from six to twelve weeks. They were intended to provide women with information about re-entering the labour market and to build-up their confidence levels. The opportunity to sample two out of four jobs clusters was also available, and although most trainees continued to be concentrated in traditional female occupations, some women

trainees did pursue options in non-traditional areas of employment like construction (Wickham, 1986). The impact of WOW was nevertheless limited by the relatively small numbers of women who were able to participate in the courses if offered. This factor was largely conditioned by the small number of centres which offered WOW schemes. Thus by 1983, WOW was run in only 20 centres and accommodated just over 4,500 women. Moreover, whilst WOW included provisions for women returning to management and new technology, such provision accounted for less than one hundred of the places available (ibid:99-101).

Manifesting the MSC's willingness to adopt a number of add-on and piecemeal measures geared towards facilitating women's access to training, the MSC was nevertheless reluctant to extend the positive discrimination clause of the SDA to its mainstream provision for the young unemployed. This reluctance turned on concerns over the illegality of such moves, in that lawyers from the Department of Employment had advised the MSC that such schemes were not vocational enough to warrant the necessary designation required by the Act. The MSC accepted this advice despite the fact that Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) took issue with the Employment Department's interpretation, and argued that such designation was not only appropriate but crucial in breaking-down the patterns of sexual segregation which the MSC's training programmes evidenced (EOC, 1981 cited Cockburn, 1987).

The MSC's record on challenging entrenched patterns of horizontal sexual segregation within the various training

programmes it co-ordinated for the young unemployed is therefore questionable. This point was evidenced by studies of young women's participation on the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP), which grew out of the Job Creation Programme, and was launched in 1978. Thus whilst the emergence of YOPs witnessed a significant improvement in the numbers of young women included within the MSC training provision for the unemployed, such that they accounted for almost half of YOP trainees, their participation remained characterised by pervasive patterns of sexual segregation. Young women continued to train in traditionally female occupations, and remained overwhelmingly concentrated in typing, general office and 'caring' placements (Brelsford et al.,1983:4). Moreover the quality of training which female YOP trainees received was, in tandem with male trainees, questionable. Thus only a minority were given the opportunity to attend off-the-job training at nearby colleges, with those who did attend tending to be subject to inferior forms of provision (Finn,1987:147-148).

Targeted towards adults, the MSC's Training Opportunities Programme (TOPs) involved higher quality forms of training provision. However although the MSC did use the special needs clause of the SDA to target some TOPS courses to women-returners, most of TOPS course were open to both men and women. Aimed at adults over the age of 19 who had been out of full-time education for at least three years, the only other criterion for entry onto TOPs was that trainees were either unemployed or had been willing to give up their job in order to train.

By the mid-1970's around 90,000 people completed TOPs courses per year. Of these 43% were women (Payne,1991:13-14); a participation rate which significantly exceeded that evidenced by women on Employment Training (ET), which it preceded. Whilst not explicitly designed as an equal opportunity intervention, TOPS did have a positive effect on women's participation in employment. It operated to increase their prospects of getting a job and enhanced the likelihood of job satisfaction. Furthermore women who completed TOPs courses were also found to experience a slight increase in pay in comparison with women who had received no recent training (Payne,1991:150).

However whilst providing women with a platform upon which to enter higher skilled occupations, such employment continued to be concentrated in occupations traditionally dominated by women. As a corollary, TOPS did little to challenge horizontal patterns of sexual segregation within the labour market. As Payne notes:

> Training on TOPS/OJTS mirrored [traditional] divisions: women were heavily concentrated on clerical and secretarial courses and courses for 'women's' jobs in manufacturing (such as sewing machining), and extremely sparsely represented on courses like engineering, science and technology and the traditional manual crafts (ibid:156)

Thus although the high quality training provided by TOPS enabled many women to move into higher skilled and better paid jobs, women trainees tended to achieve this by following traditional female career paths and not by breaking into male preserves. Moreover whilst some women did attempt to use the programme in order to gain access to training in occupations

dominated by men, such efforts were likely to be fraught with complications, both in terms of the initial stage of their application to the job centre and their subsequent interview with training providers. This is a point which is evidenced by the bemused experiences of one such woman who wanted to train in joinery:

> The first stage of the TOPS application [took] place in the job centre. The man who was dealing with my application ...went out of his way to [inaccurately] impress upon me that joinery was mostly about heavy work including a lot of work at heights...He was also very conscientious about saving the tax-payers money...he was confident that no one would employ me as a joiner so it would be a waste of money training me. (At the next stage, an interview with the training providers) They thought it was definitely not a good idea that I should go on the [joinery] course...I was not strong enough; I would not get a job afterwards; there were no toilet facilities for women; if I used the men's toilet facilities, I might get raped. They spent a lot of time questioning each other over what could be done with me...'Perhaps plumbing?' 'Oh, no, she would have to carry a bath upstairs on her own!' (cited Wickham,1986:101).

Whilst evidencing some limited concessions to women's training needs, which extended to the inclusion of some relatively small scale 'add-on' measures aimed at promoting women's access to training, the first stage in the MSC's life-cycle therefore had a limited impact on challenging entrenched patterns of gender segregation in training. However even these limited gains were to be eclipsed during the second stage of the MSC's life-cycle, as its energies become increasing focused on developing a series of politically expedient and essentially ad hoc 'training' solutions to the problem of increasing rates of unemployment.

Between 1973 and 1980 the overall unemployment rate rose from just over 2.5% to just under 7%, whilst levels of

unemployment amongst the under-18's increased by over four-fold; rising from 2.5% to 11% during the same period (Jackson, 1985:35). Within this, young women were particularly affected. Whilst males under 25 accounted for 30% of the overall male unemployment rate, young women accounted for 52% of the female unemployment. This factor, in tandem with the decline in the manufacturing sector and rise in service sector forms of employment, perhaps accounted for women's increasing participation on the training programmes which grew out of the Job Creation Scheme referred to above. In addition young people were increasingly confronted with the problem of long-term unemployment, with 1976 figures of just under 5% more that doubling by 1979 (ibid:36).

This placed the problem of youth unemployment firmly on the political agenda of the latter part of the Labour Government's administration, with explanations of the problem increasingly turning on the putative deficiencies of the young unemployed themselves (Finn,1987). Contributing towards the breakdown of the social democratic consensus which had emerged during the post-war period, the deepening economic crisis which these increased levels of unemployment signalled meant from 1978 onwards the MSC was called upon to develop a series of short-lived and piecemeal programmes aimed at promoting skill levels and commitment to work amongst the young unemployed. This was an attempt to address levels of skill and work commitment which the Government and employers perceived young people increasingly lacked (Gamble, 1987; Benn & Fairley, 1986).

The extent to which such programmes were motivated by genuine concerns over the skill deficiencies of young workers is however debatable. Thus in addition to being dogged with reputations of offering poor quality training (Finn,1987), the 'deficit' model implied by the series of training programmes which the MSC provided belied a central paradox. In short, they purported to give training when few or no jobs were available (Gleeson,1989). Despite this, the 'deficit' model was to flourish with the election of the Thatcher Government in 1979, and the various Conservative administrations which followed on from it (ibid., Benn & Fairley, 1986).

Evidencing a break with the post-war consensus, the Thatcher Government's firm commitment to monetarist fiscal policies, which had been present in nascent form within the Labour administration it superseded, heralded a redefinition of social and economic priorities (Gamble, 1987) Pivoting on a commitment to roll-back the State and to remove restrictive labour market practices, the Thatcher Government's hostility to the corporatist state interventions represented by the MSC was initially manifest in the budgets cuts it imposed upon it. Between 1979 and 1980 the MSC's budget therefore fell from over £1,000 million to £670 million; a funding level which was to remain constant for the next three years despite burgeoning levels of unemployment(Finn, 1987:134).

Despite this initial hostility, the 1980s witnessed a mushrooming of the MSC's activities as a series of programmes

were developed in order to counter-act the effects of escalating levels of unemployment, with a particular emphasis being place on youth unemployment. One consequence of this was that the distinction between real training and unemployment relief/job creation became increasingly blurred, with Finn arguing that by the early 1980s, the MSC had come to represent the key state agency acting to mitigate the political consequences of a return to mass unemployment (1987:154).

THE NEW TRAINING INITIATIVE AND THE RE-ASSERTION OF MARKET PRINCIPLES IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

It was against this background that the Thatcher Government outlined its new training policy in 1981 within its White Paper, ' **A New Training Initiative**' (NTI). This was in part prompted by the MSC's own review of the 1973 Act, '**Outlook on Training**'. This review argued that efforts to promote a training culture were impeded by the challenge this was perceived to represent to the traditional modes of entry, 'ownership' of skilled work created through apprenticeships, and by limited funds which ITBs were able to generate from industry (Ainley and Corney, 1990).

However the Government's NTI only selectively drew upon the MSC's recommendations. Thus whilst one of the NTI key recommendations involved the replacement of traditional time-served apprenticeships with modular systems of apprenticeship involving certified and standardised form of accreditation,

it ignored the MSC's recommendation that the statutory limits on the levies ITBs could generate from industry be lifted.

Perceived by the trade union movement as an attack upon the traditional influence it had exerted over apprenticeship recruitment and training, this perception was exacerbated by the stance which the Government adopted towards ITBs, whose membership included trade union representatives. Thus not only did Government ignore the MSC's recommendation of increasing the funds ITBs could levy from industry, the NTI actually signalled the Government's abolition of 16 out of its 23 ITBs.

The NTI's reform of apprenticeships and the abolition of most ITBs signalled the Government's intention to reassert the principle of voluntarism within Britain's VET system (Green, 1991). Coinciding with industrial shifts which involved a movement away from manufacturing and towards service sector industries, the Initiative contributed towards a dramatic decline in the numbers of traditional apprenticeships in manufacturing, which fell by almost 70,000 between 1980 and 1985 (Chapman and Tooze, 1987 cited Lee, 1989:159).

These processes of reform and restructuring had contradictory implications of women. On the one hand, the decline of the apprenticeship system potentially operated to enhance women's training opportunities, in that they tended to have been excluded from such traditional forms of training (Wickham, 1986; Cockburn,1987). However, on the other hand, the de-regulationist stance which the Government's abolition of the

majority of ITBs represented signalled an attempt to reassert the primacy of market principles with its VET system. In doing this, it was effectively advocating a VET arrangement which, as noted above, had been informed by dynamics which were far from 'sex-blind'. During this period and beyond, the Government therefore increasingly appealed to the role of employers and the operation of market forces as a solution to the country's training and unemployment problems; an emphasis which can in part be said to prefigure its subsequent creation of TECs. Thus in 1983, the Department of Employment stated that:

> the best way to help young people get jobs and training is to act with market forces, not against them. Employers are operating in the real world - the world of profit (Cited Cockburn,1987:69).

By the early 1980s unemployment was climbing to record levels, with almost three million unemployed (Ainley and Corney,1990). High levels of youth unemployment provided a particular focus for state intervention as the school to work transition was restructured according to the emerging ethos of 'new vocationalism'. In response to this, the Government replaced YOPs with the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), which whilst increasing the quality of training given to the young unemployed, also involved the creation of a two-tier training scheme centring upon a distinction between trainees which were given employment status during their period of training and those which were not (Finn, 1987). This distinction heralded a further form of inequality for young women trainees, who were disproportionately concentrated in the latter tier of trainees who were denied employment status,

whilst overwhelmingly being channelled into traditional female areas (Cockburn,1987).

In addition to the rise in youth unemployment, levels of adult unemployment also continued to grow at a steady rate over this period. In response, various programmes specifically for the unemployed were set up, and were later brought together under the heading of the Employment Training programme (ET). In order to fund YTS and ET, funding was gradually withdrawn from other programmes. Principal among these was the high quality training TOPS, briefly renamed the Old Job Training Scheme (OJTS), which was eventually swallowed up by ET. The implications of this for adult women's access to state funded training were significant, in that their access to the scheme was effectively impeded by the Government's stipulation that eligibility for ET hinged on the requirement that its trainees had been registered as unemployed for 6 months. This feature of the scheme discriminated against women given that they were less eligible for unemployment benefit, and were therefore less likely to register as unemployed.

As the decade progressed, central Government increased its control over the MSC, using it as a means of imposing new forms of vocationalism upon the education system and further disposing of the restrictive practices surrounding apprenticeship (Green,1992). All but one of the remaining 8 ITBs were abolished, to be replaced by non-statutory organisations responsible for the co-ordination of training within specific industrial sectors.

The removal of the statutory grant-levy system witnessed a decline in the amount employers invested in training. Manufacturing apprenticeships declined to 58,000 by 1987 and were increasingly displaced by state funded training provided through YTS, which in addition to embodying pervasive patterns of gender stereo-typing, became increasingly dogged by reputations of offering low quality forms of training. This reputation also plagued Youth Training (YT), its successor, and also continued to represent a key criticism of ET, its adult equivalent (Ainley and Corney,1990).

TRAINING AND ENTERPRISE COUNCILS: RETURNING THE 'LEADERSHIP OF THE TRAINING SYSTEM TO EMPLOYERS, WHERE IT BELONGS'?.

In 1987, the Thatcher Government, inspired by a third election victory and the prospect of an apparent economic up-turn, initiated a further restructuring of the UK's VET system. Following in the wake of its abolition of the corporatist MSC[3], briefly replaced by the short-lived Training Agency (TA), the Government published its White Paper, **'Employment for the 1990s'** (1988). This signalled a three tiered process of reform, which on a national level involved the creation of the National Training Task Force

[3] .The Government's abolition of the MSC was legitimated in terms of the TUC's withdrawal from the body; a withdrawal in which the TUC's hand was effectively forced by dint of the Government's introduction of ET, despite the strong opposition which the TUC had expressed to this. Thus, ET, like many of the other training schemes for the unemployed which Government had introduced in the 1980s evoked deep concerns within the trade union movement around the mechanism it represented with respect to providing employers with a ready facility to cheap labour, which were not only seen as threatening the employment status of established workers but which were also perceived to constitute impoverished and exploitative terms of 'employment and training' for those included within such schemes. See Ainley and Corney (1990) for further discussion of these points.

(NTTF) in 1989. The second tier related to the industrial level and represented the culmination of the Government's strategy to remove the statutory powers of the remaining ITBs in order to constitute them as voluntaristic Industrial Training Organisations.

However the most significant of these reforms hinged on the Government's intention to replace the TA with a network of local, employer-led Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). The development of these Councils was to be overseen by the NFFT, a body which largely comprised of leading figures from industry in addition to representatives from the TA. Mandated to promote economic growth by developing a local, market-led system of VET in England and Wales, the Government recommended its creation of TECs as a 'truly radical step' which would give the:

> leadership of the training system to employers, where it belongs. Through their participation and involvement it will change the focus of training and bring home the importance of training for all business success to every employer throughout the country. By increasing local employer responsibility employers' [will] recognise the necessity to train and the returns available (Department of Employment, 1988:43).

TECs assumed most of the TA's responsibilities, the majority of which related to the co-ordination of YT and ET, and other Government programmes like the Enterprise Allowance Scheme, targeted towards the unemployed. Those that remained were passed over to the Training Enterprise and Education Division (TEED) of the Employment Department. TECs were established as private companies, controlled by boards of directors comprising of between 9-15 members. Their creation witnessed a transfer of over 5,000 Civil Service workers to the private

sector, initially on a seconded basis. This move generated significant opposition from Civil Service trade unions. In addition, their establishment involved a massive shift of public sector funds to the private sector, which involved just under £3 billion (Peck,1990).

In effect, the establishment of TECs represented a large-scale privatisation process. The Government's commitment to locate employers at the heart of this reform was underlined by its stipulation that a two-third minimum of TEC board directors should be recruited from local senior personnel (Managing Directors or their equivalent) within the private sector. This signified an explicit rejection of the corporatist approach which had characterised the UK's training system from the 1964 Industrial Training Act. Moreover, the creation of TECs evidenced a further marginalisation[4] of trade unions, who were previously seen to have a legitimate interest and role in shaping the UK's training policy (Peck,1990). Furthermore, the Government's requirement with respect to the senior status of both employer and non-employer directors on TEC boards was a major impediment to the inclusion of significant numbers of women at board level, given the limited inroads women have made into such posts. These limitations were particularly apparent within the private sector, where the overwhelming majority of senior positions continued to be occupied by men.

[4] . Reference to 'further marginalising' is used advisedly here, given the debates around whether trade union representative were equal partners within such corporatist bodies. See Finn (1987) and Cockburn (1987) for further discussion of this point plus Ainley and Corney (1990).

The Government indicated a number of key principles which informed its creation of TECs (Department of Employment,1988 & 1989). Included within these was the desire to generate a locally based training system through which national programmes like YT and ET could be tailored to meet local skill need, and a commitment to develop an employer-led approach to training in order to shift the 'ownership' of training from the public sector to the private sector.

Finally, and by way of both underpinning and expanding on its logic for creating TECs, the Government argued that the market-drive which TECs were mandated to promote would generate the conditions upon which State investment in training might be reduced. This was both because of the greater efficiencies it was anticipated would accrue from such a market-led approach, and because of the putative role which Government ascribed to TECs as 'agents of change'. This turned on the way in which their employer-led and private sector status was perceived a representing a facility by which local employers might identify with TECs' proselytising mission around the need to develop a 'pro-training' culture. Having thus been persuaded of the need to invest in training, it was assumed employers would be more willing to take responsibility for the expense incurred.

Suggesting a wide-ranging and radical role for TECs, the Government's rhetoric in this regard was somewhat undermined by reality. Allocated budgets of between 15-50 million, depending on the population of the areas they covered, the Government's funding of TECs was initially based on

assessments of local rates of unemployment (Peck, 1990; IDS,1991). Required to co-ordinate training for the unemployment falling into the Government's guarantee groups, which included the young unemployed between 16 and 18 on YT, and adults registered as unemployed for between 6 to 12 months on ET, the YT and ET funding blocks which TECs received collectively accounted for around 90% of their total budget. In addition to these two blocks of funding, they were allocated Enterprise funds earmarked for the co-ordination of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme and other business/enterprise related activities, a Management budget to cover administration costs, and a small Local Initiative Fund (LIF) (based on population levels up to a fixed maximum of £500,000).

The first wave of TECs became operational in the early part of 1990, a period in which optimism was still being expressed with regard to the emergence of the UK from the long period of recession it had experienced. In cognisance of this, and the reduction in unemployment rates which were anticipated, Government indicated that the political imperative for state expenditure on training for the unemployed would diminish. This logic was explicitly stated by Government in the period leading up to its creation of TECs:

> [TECs must recognise] that public investment in training and enterprise will decrease as unemployment falls [and therefore must] aim to secure a greater level of private investment in education, training and enterprise (TA Guidelines to TECs, quoted **Financial Times**, 27.1.89).

However, by the time all 82 TEC had become operational at the beginning of 1992, initial optimism around the UK's economic

recovery had become dissipated by its second dip into recession at the beginning of 1991 (**Independent,** 7.1.91;**F.T.**,30.5.91). This was signalled by a 80,000 rise in the number of registered unemployed in December 1990. Representing the largest increase to have occurred for a decade, this was shortly followed by figures indicating that the number of long-term unemployed had risen by 17,000 in the quarter year up to January 1991. This increase was greater than any recorded in the previous five years. Moreover,the total level of unemployment was anticipated to rise from just under 2 million to 2.5 million by the end of the year, whilst figures for the middle of 1992 heralded a figure of 2.7 million registered unemployed (ibid.; **Daily Telegraph,** 9.7.92).

Despite the increasing demand which escalating levels of unemployment made on TECs during this period with respect to their responsibility to meet training guarantees to the unemployed, the Government adhered to its commitment to reduce public spending on training. Cutting TEC budgets in the first year of their operation from £2.9 billion to £2.5 billion, this figure was to be cut further in 1992 to £2.2 billion (**F.T**, 5.10.1990;**Independent**,9.7.92). By way of attempting to ameliorate its cuts in this respect, a number of flexibilities were given to TECs with regard to their co-ordination of YT and ET. Included within these was the discretion to reduce the 6 month entitlement to ET, in order to develop a range of shorter training programmes for the adult unemployed (**F.T.**,28.11.90). The introduction of this

discretion in 1991 coincided with the Government's efforts to underpin the market-drive of TECs by making 25% of their budget contingent upon out-put related criteria. This out-put related funding (ORF) was measured in terms of the achievement of National Vocational Qualfications (NVQs) for YT, and jobs on ET. In addition, Government also permitted TECs to switch up to 5% of their budgets between different funding blocks in order to facilitate greater flexibility in responding to local training needs (**F.T.**, 14.11.90; **F.T.**,28.11.90).

The extent to which such flexibilities did ameliorate the impact of the Government budget cuts is however questionable. Concerns about the ability of TECs to meet even the training needs of those included within Government guarantee groups were therefore widely reported during the period in which these flexibilities had been granted (**F.T.**,3.6.91; **Daily Telegraph**,9.7.92). Such concerns raised doubts with respect to the ability of TECs to incorporate a wider population within their training remit. This was because the deployment of TEC resources with respect to groups like women-returners, who tended to be excluded from their guarantee groups on ET, were made contingent by Government on TECs having first met the entitlements of those included within their guarantee groups.

Moreover, the prospects of this short-fall being bridged by greater investment in training amongst employers in the context of recession seemed highly doubtful. Highlighting the

particular problems which the Government's assumption represented in the short-term, one TEC Chief Executive, in response to the cuts it had imposed argued, 'its non-sense [for Government] to offer less money... You can't shift the costs of investing in people on to the private sector in a recession' (**F.T.**,3.6.91).

In support of this point, a range of reports suggested that the recession had witnessed a cut in employers' investments in training (Price Waterhouse and the Nottingham Business School, 1991; **F.T.**,8.5.91; **Independent**, 7.1.91; **Guardian**,8.7.91). Furthermore it seemed that employers directly involved within TECs were not immune from this development. For instance, a survey conducted by the Employment Institute of 31 TEC chairs, into the training plans of the companies they managed, revealed around a quarter intended to recruit fewer trainees in 1991 than they had done in the previous year. The survey further indicated that only a minority were expecting to increase expenditure on training over the same period. This finding, the Institute argued, showed the 'fragility of the Government's reliance on a voluntary approach to training during a recession' (cited **F.T.**,21.1.91).

Reinforcing these findings, and providing insights into the scale of the problem, the Department of Employment's Labour Force Survey operated to dispute the Government's claims that employers' had been convinced of the importance to maintain a long-term commitment to training. Indicating that the number

of employees in receipt of training in a 4 week period prior to its spring survey had fallen from 3.3 million in 1990 to 3.2 million in 1991, it also indicated that the number of people included on Government training programmes for the unemployed had fallen from 449,000 to 408,000 over the same period (cited **F.T.**,11.3.92).

Moreover, even prior to the UK's second dip into recession at the beginning of 1991, when optimism around its economic recovery had prompted concerns around the re-emergence of skill shortages (Smith, 1990), it seemed that employers had still expressed a reluctance to invest in training. Measuring employers' commitment to training in terms of the funding allocated to their respect training budgets, a survey by the Institute of Directors in 1989 suggested just over two-thirds of employers were planning to increase the amount of funding they allocated to their training budgets in response to the recruitment difficulties they anticipated in the next 12 months. However, this increase was based on relatively low levels of current expenditure. Thirty-seven per cent of those surveyed indicated that they presently allocated less than 1% of their total labour cost to training, with 20% of these spending less than 0.5% of these costs on training (cited **F.T**,2.5.89).

Although emphasising the 'fragility' of relying on a market-led approach to training in the short-term context of recession, the extent to which such an approach can be relied upon in the longer-term is also questionable. Moreover, these questions can be raised both with respect to its adequacy in

contributing towards to the skills needs of the economy and workforce as a whole, and also with regard to promoting greater training opportunities for women and other social groups subject to labour market inequality.

While heralded by Government as a 'truly radical step' geared towards returning the 'leadership of the training system to employers, where it belongs' (D.E, 1988:43), the rationality of the Government's formation of TECs has been subject to much critical scrutiny and comment. For example, the Director of the employment research and lobby group, 'Campaign for Work, responded to the Government's intention in this respect by arguing that it represented an 'utterly irresponsible leap in the dark in view of the seriousness of Britain's skill shortages and employers' abysmal training record relative to our competitors'(F.T. ,9.1.89).

Reflecting concerns around the apparent irrationality of seeking to rely on a market-led system of training when such reliance in the period prior to the 1964 Industrial Training Act was seen to have contributed towards the comparative inadequacy which has been perceived to characterise the UK's training system, one strand of these concerns relates to the low priority which UK employers have traditionally attached to training (Vickerstaffe and Sheldrake, 1987). This low priority, in contrast to international competitors, remained evident (McLeish, 1990; **F.T.**, 2.5.89). Tending to see training as a cost rather than an investment, the low priority which employers' attached to training was thereby likely to slip even further on their business agenda in

periods of recession, with training budgets tending to be one of the first things to be cut (**F.T.**,11.3.92).

Relatedly, and perhaps more fundamentally, the extent to which training has ever operated on market principles of supply and demand is debatable. The rational response of employers in this respect hinged on 'poaching' skilled labour in order to reduce training costs, or purposely inserting inflexibilities within training in order to safe-guard against such 'poaching' when such investments were undertaken by employers. As a corollary, the legitimacy of relying on the market to guarantee either the short or longer-term skills needs of national economies has been queried by analysts who underline the need for state regulation of training if such skills needs are to be realised (Streek, 1989).

This raises questions in terms of the logic which informed the Government's decision to create a network of employer-led TECs. Consequently, it can be argued that rather than representing a rational strategy, the Government's decision in this respect represented more of an 'ideologically motivated strategy, [which] invit[es] the gross neglect of the development of skill resources' (Rainbird, 1990:2). Viewed from this perspective, it can be seen to represent the culmination of the de-regulationist strategies which the Thatcher Government inserted under the auspices of the State's regulation of training in the decade which preceded the introduction of TECs (Green,1992).

Representing a mechanism by which to promote market forces by the deployment of public funds within an arena which appears to never have functioned around the neo-classical dictates of supply and demand, the potentially negative implications that the Government's creation of TECs suggests with regard to limiting the access of the UK's workforce as a whole to training is therefore apparent. However this reform, and the logic which informed it can be said to have particular implications for women and other groups subject to market inequality. As indicated above, far from being 'blind' to differences mapped around identities of gender, ethnicity, and disablity, such difference represents a key locus of labour market inflexibility. Despite the explanations developed by those favouring minimalist/liberal perspectives on inequality, these inflexibilities are not so much an expression of market irrationalities but are instead an articulation of deeply entrenched structural interests. In the case of women's inequality, these features of the labour market are informed by the inter-play of patriarchy and capitalism (Walby,1986; Cockburn,1991; Rees, 1992).

Complicit within the (re)production of the inequalities which women experience in training and employment via the horizontal and vertical patterns of sexual segregation they generate, the extent to which a training system predicated upon privileging the role of such gendered market-drives can be relied upon to promote greater equality for women in training is therefore subject to contention (Rees,1992; Peck,1990; Payne, 1991; Cockburn; 1987).Furthermore, the

potential for the disadvantage experienced by other social groups subject to labour market inequality to be reinforced within market-driven approaches to training has been underlined. The tendency for black participants on YT to be marginalised has thus been noted (Mizen,1990), whilst the priority which TECs attach to promoting greater equality for ethnic minorities and those with disabilities has been questioned (Boddy, 1995; **Independent**,12,2,95; **F.T.**,11.3.92). Likewise, the inter-play of identities around differences of gender, ethnicity etc. which, for example, shape the experiences of ethnic minority women, has been shown to incur over-lapping forms of disadvantage with respect to training and employment (Cockburn, 1987).

Placing an important conceptual caveat against the likelihood of TECs contributing towards the development of greater equality for women in the training they co-ordinate, this is potentially compounded when the rhetoric around TECs is stripped away. Thus, in the absence of employers' commitments to increase their investments in training in order to breach the vacuum generated by Government's reduced spending on training, the 'mundane' reality of TECs is that they are primarily tied to the delivery of training programmes for the unemployed. Under the auspices of the State, such programmes tended to be characterised by an under-representation of women, entrenched patterns of sexual-stereotyping, in addition to being dogged by reputations of offering low quality forms of training (EOC, 1991; Cockburn, 1987; Ainley and Corney, 1990).

This suggests a somewhat fragile and questionable basis upon which to generate greater opportunities for women in training. The Government's creation of TECs nevertheless coincided with a period in which the importance of expanding women's training opportunities was increasingly being emphasised. Although one strand of this was informed by 'social justice' concerns, voiced by feminists, women more generally, and other groups committed to promoting greater equality for women in training (as part of a wider political project) (Cockburn, 1987 & 1991, Rees, 1992), a second strand was informed by more instrumental and economistic concerns.

Principal amongst the latter were arguments around the 'demographic time-bomb', which turned on a growing awareness of the declining numbers of school-leavers available to the labour market, and thereby suggested that employers would need to look to women and other marginalised groups in order to meet their future skills needs (DE, 1988). Implying a coincidence between the social justice and economic case for promoting greater opportunities for women in training , the articulation of this was couched in essentially liberal terms. By removing the barriers which impede women's access to training, it was thereby argued that both the individual and the economy would benefit (Weiner, 1989:27).

This perspective operated to render an equal opportunities emphasis in VET and employment, whether based on challenging gender and/or other sources of labour market rigidity, which was geared towards increasing the pool of skilled workers from which employers could draw, as 'eminently sensible' (Weiner,1989:27). This rationale provided the context for

the Government's backing of Opportunity 2000; an EO initiative launched by 'Business in the Community' in 1991. This initiative involved a voluntaristic, and employer-led project which aimed to emphasise the importance of developing and recognising the potential of female employees in both the private and public sectors(**F.T.**,29.10.91).

Opportunity 2000 was heralded by Prime Minister John Major as 'the boldest corporate equal opportunities initiative yet seen' (quoted **Guardian**, 27.10.92)[5]. Keen to recommend the Initiative to women and employers, it seemed that Government attached significant importance to its objectives:

> Why should half our population [the female half] go through life like a hobbled horse in a steeple chase. The answer of course is that they shouldn't and increasingly they won't... At present there is a social revolution going on in the role of women in our society and it is happening whether men like it or not. It will go on happening, nothing will stop it and I believe nothing will slow it. And not only is this revolution right socially, I believe it is right economically as well (John Major quoted in BBC News in feature by Polly Toynbee on launch of Opportunity 2000, 28.10.1991)

Launched during the period in the TEC network was in the process of emerging, the prescription which this suggested seemed clear. In tandem with their mandate to promote a pro-training culture amongst local employers, employer-led TECs should also be committed to embedding a pro-equal opportunities commitment within this. Underlining this within the advice it gave to TECs during their formation period, the Government was particularly concerned to emphasise the

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[5] It is interesting to note here that despite the Prime Minister's exhortations in this respect, he appeared to feel no imperative to recognise the talents and abilities of his Party's female Members of Parliament, in that he had selected a Cabinet wholly comprised of men. Moreover, it appeared that the Government was reluctant to support mechanisms by which the Initiative might be subject to systematic evaluation, in that it rejected a European Commission plan for EC Governments to monitor national programmes on sex equality; a plan which it rejected less than two months after the launch of the Initiative, and which was condemned by the EOC (**F.T.** ,4.12.91)

economic case for this:

> At present the potential of many women... is not being fully developed. Apart from legal considerations, this is a waste employers cannot afford, particularly at a time when the population who are of working age is hardly growing (TEC Guide to Planning, TA,1989:13).

However the degree to which women's interests in equality and those of employers can be so easily reconciled needs to be scrutinised. This obscures a key paradox embedded within workplace focused equality movements, something Cockburn insightfully notes in her study of such movements. She thus argues that they are:

> Essentially contradictory. On the one hand sex equality is a demand women make on their own behalf: the right to paid work, to the chance of an occupation with fair pay, training and prospects and to support with child-care. On the other hand, it is introduced into organisations by owners and managers 'on behalf' of women. Though some employers are genuinely concerned with justice, often it is transparently clear that it is organisational ends they have primarily in mind. They aim to improve recruitment and retention of women whose qualities they perceive themselves as needing. Or they just want a good public image (1991:16).

Moreover, and relatedly, the extent to which the instrumental and economistic strand of this equality equation can, in itself, be relied upon to generate conditions upon which to promote a consistent and comprehensive challenge to the patterns of inequality which shape women's participation in training and employment, needs to be queried.

Tending to make the issue of equality contingent upon economic need, one implication of this rationale is that the

equality imperative may become muted by economic recession, as concerns around skill and labour market shortages diminish. Moreover, the degree to which the presence of skill and labour market shortages can be relied upon to break down gender based labour market rigidities, and thereby promote greater equality for women, is questionable. For instance, employers' have been shown to deploy a variety of mechanisms other than extending greater opportunities to women when confronted with such shortages in traditionally male areas of employment (Dickens, 1989). This is a factor which underlines the deeply entrenched nature of gender divisions within the labour market.

In addition, the extent to which this rationale is likely to provide an impetus for evoking positive change for all groups of women is doubtful. Inserted within existing status hierarchies of class, gender and ethnicity, employers' deployment of EO as a human resource tool may instead translate into promoting and developing the talents and abilities of, for example, white middle class women, at the expense of working class women, or women from ethnic minority groups (Cockburn, 1989 & 1991). Furthermore, even such limited equality projects suggest a dilemma, in that the opportunities they promise are predicated on women conforming to the androcentric working patterns and organisational structures which conventionally represent the 'norm' within the workplace (ibid.; Rees,1993)[6].

[6] For further discussion of the implications for women employed in male organisational work cultures, see Sheppard (1989) 'Organisations, Power and Sexuality: The Image and Self-Image of Women Managers' in Hearn et al (Eds.) The Sexuality of Organisation.

Whilst there are strong arguments for suggesting that TECs should be concerned with promoting greater equality for women within the training they co-ordinate, the likelihood of TECs realising this prescription can thus be said to be potentially circumscribed by a number of tensions and paradoxes. It is these features of the programme that will be explored below.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a thematic and historical review of women's participation in the UK's training system. It has attempted to indicate the way in which this has been mediated by processes of exclusion and segregation which operate to belie the putative 'sex-blindness' of market imperatives. It has built upon the literature reviewed in the preceding Chapter, which explored the patterns of correspondence between women's participation in employment and training, and the role that the latter played in prefiguring women's position in the former. The aim of this has been to further underline the importance of promoting greater equality for women in training.

Taking this as its basis, the final section of this Chapter involved a critical assessment of the potential for TECs to generate such equality for women within the training they co-ordinate. Noting the tension which exists between this and their mandate to promote a market-driven, employer-led training system, it was nevertheless suggested that the emergence of TECs coincided with a period in which the need to generate greater equality for women in both training and

employment appeared to be placed high upon both public and business agendas.

Seeming to suggest that TECs should attach priority to promoting greater equality for women within the training they co-ordinate, this thesis is concerned with an assessment of the extent to which this prescription has been realised by TECs within their initial period of operation. Aimed at providing insights into the level of commitment which TECs manifest in this respect with regard to the substantive forms of training they co-ordinate for women, the study will also attempt to illuminate the internal and external structures and processes which operate to promote and/or undermine such commitments. It is hoped that this will illuminate some of the factors which operate to circumscribe the potential of TECs in this regard. In doing this, the research aims to contribute towards a more nuanced assessment of TECs potential to challenge the inequalities which tend to characterise women's relationship to training.

By way of prefacing a discussion of the findings of this study, the Chapter which follows outlines the research methods and strategies used to generate the results it reports.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

INTRODUCTION

This research aims to provide insights into three broad questions. First, it seeks to explore what forms of training TECs co-ordinate for women in order to critically assess the implications that such provision has with respect to promoting greater equality for women in training. Secondly, the research aims to explore the macro-level processes which shape TEC responses to the issue of promoting greater gender equality in training. In order to do this, the study addresses questions around the extent to which a market-driven and employer-led approach to training can be reconciled with extending women's training opportunities.

Following on from this, the third and final research objective involves an exploration of the micro-level processes in and around the local organisation of TECs, and the role that these play in shaping the priority which TECs' attach to developing greater equality for women in training at a local level. A key strand within this involves a critical and comparative evaluation of the form and level of infra-structural support TECs manifest with respect to promoting gender equality within their internal organisation.

The research questions which inform this study can therefore be concisely stated in the following way. The first turns on

asking what TECs are doing at a substantive level to develop greater equality for women in the training they co-ordinate. Following on from this, and by way of extending and deepening the study's analysis, it aims to provide insight into the 'why' factors which inform this feature of TECs operational activities. In order to do this, it seeks to illuminate both the macro and micro-level structures and processes which inform TEC responses to developing greater equality for women within their operational remits.

In order to address these research questions and concerns, the study used a two-pronged research strategy. The first prong involved the design and analysis of a postal questionnaire survey which was sent to all 82 TECs in England and Wales. This questionnaire was used primarily as a mapping device which aimed to generate a range of data on what TECs in general were doing to expand women's training opportunities. The second prong involved in-depth, interview based case studies of three different TECs. One of the key strengths of this latter method turned on the way in which it facilitated a study of social processes. In this way it operated to complement and enhance the data generated by the survey stage of the research, by providing deeper insights into the 'why' type questions flowing from the wealth of information on 'what' TECs were doing, which had been generated by the questionnaire survey. Discussing each of these methods in turn, this chapter explains the rationale which informed their deployment, the way in which they contributed towards the research findings, and the limitations which they presented.

POSTAL QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

The design and administration of a postal questionnaire, sent to all 82 TECs operating in England and Wales, represented the first prong of the research. Prior to its dispatch, the questionnaire was piloted on two TECs with which contact had already been established. After some small alterations, this was dispatched, along with a covering letter which included a request for any relevant internally produced literature, at the beginning of January 1992[1].

The questionnaire mailing was addressed to the Chief Executive in each of the 82 TECs surveyed. The reason for this in large part turned on a recognition of the 'gate-keeper' status which TEC Chief Executives tended to occupy within their organisations. It was also informed by an awareness of the way in which the information which the questionnaire sought to elicit was likely to straddle more than one Department within each TEC. Thus by addressing the questionnaire to the Chief Executive the aim was to both gain support for the study at the highest level of TEC management, and also to prevent the risk of the questionnaire becoming 'lost' within TEC organisational structures.

Yielding a total of 37 responses in the first round, a second mailing[2] to non-respondents prompted a further 9 responses, which meant that a total of 46 TECs ultimately replied.

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[1] .In order to facilitate subsequent identification, all TECs on the mailing list were allocated a number which corresponded with the number written on the respective copies of the questionnaire which they were each sent.

Representing a response rate of 56%, just over a third of these (n=15) included further relevant supporting literature. In some cases it was apparent that TEC Chief Executives had assumed direct responsibility for completing the questionnaire themselves. In most cases however it appeared that the questionnaire had been devolved to members of TEC management whose operational responsibilities related directly to the areas covered by the questionnaire.

Most of the questions included in the survey were pre-coded and were analysed with the aid of SPSS/PC. Where appropriate, recipients where given scope to elaborate on their responses, while a small number of questions allowed a free response; an option favoured when it was felt that pre-determined categories might fail to encapsulate the variety of responses TECs might exhibit.

Aims and Rationale

The questionnaire was designed to generate data with respect to the priority which TECs attached to promoting greater opportunities for women within the training they co-ordinated at a substantive level. It also aimed to generate information on the internal mechanisms they had inserted to support this and to generate a range of background data against which to locate these findings. As a corollary, it aimed to elicit information with regard to the following four broad areas: board and sub-board composition, training co-ordinated , funding, the provisions TECs made with regard to

[2] . The second round was conducted two weeks after the first, and included a further copy of the questionnaire in case that sent in the original mailing had been mislaid,

expanding women's training opportunities within their operational remits, and the forms of infra-structural support implemented to underpin this.

Representing a valuable mapping device, which indicated points of similarity and differences between TEC respondents, the main strength of the questionnaire survey hinged upon the facility it provided to elicit data from a large number of TECs with regard the general context in which they operated, their structural organisation and what they were doing at a substantive level with regard to the training they co-ordinated for women. The facility it offered with respect to obtaining data from a large number of the target population, whilst incurring relatively small resource costs, is conventionally defined as representing a key strength of the questionnaire survey (Newell,1993; Hammersley,1992). Providing the basis upon which to make more effective generalisations to the TEC population has a whole than would, for example, perhaps[3] have been possible if the study had wholly relied on data obtained from a small number of in-depth case-studies, this facility was perceived to represent one of the key reasons for incorporating it within the study's research strategy (ibid.).

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along with a covering letter.

[3] 'Perhaps' is used advisedly here given the steps which can be taken to enhance the representativeness of a relatively small number of case studies. Thus the point made here is not intended to suggest that only large scale quantitative research can legitimately make claims to be representative but is instead simply meant to imply that the deployment of this latter approach, given the time and resource limitations which circumscribed this study, represented a pragmatic attempt to promote some of the claims which it might make in this regard. For further discussion of this point see Hammersley (1992) and Ward Schofield (1993).

Limitations

Whilst noting the apparent advantages of the survey method in contributing to the study's ability to generate data which might be more effectively generalised to the TEC population as a whole, two main limitations were associated with it. The first hinged on the response rate elicited. Thus whilst the response rate was relatively good in that well over half of those surveyed did reply, the fact that 36 TECs did not respond potentially created problems with regard how representative respondents were of the wider TEC population.

The problem of non-response with respect to postal questionnaire surveys represents a major limitation associated with the method. A key reason for this turns on the way in which non-respondents may differ in significant ways from the respondent population, in such a way as to undermine the external validity of survey finding to the relevant population as a whole (Hakim,1987).In order to address this limitation within the context of this study, comparisons with other relevant research, where available[4], were made in an effort to check for the presence of any significant differences which might have operated to undermine or question the credibility of this study's survey findings. Whilst the scope for these comparisons was limited, those that were made did not reveal any major discrepancies. In tandem with this, comparisons between respondents and non-respondents with regard to external criteria around their

size and geographic location did not suggest that the respondent population differed in any significant way from the non-respondent population. Whilst not exhaustive, the checks which were available therefore provided no reason to believe that those TECs who replied to the survey differed in any significant sense from those which did not. Consequently, it seems reasonable to conclude that the survey results of the study can be viewed as representative of the TEC population as a whole.

The second limitation, which was both anticipated and encountered, related to that which is generally perceived to characterise survey approaches. Hinging upon an apparent trade-off between the size of population covered and the depth of information generated (ibid.; Hammersley, 1992), the implications of this were particularly apparent when using a postal survey, in that the administration of a lengthy and detailed questionnaire might have had a negative impact on the response rate, and thereby undermined the rationale which had informed its deployment (Hakim, 1987).

Relatedly, and perhaps more fundamentally, a third limitation of the survey hinged on the nature of data it was able to elicit (Epstein Jayaratne, 1993). Whilst valuable with respect to providing insights into **what** TECs were doing, its potential to generate insights into the **why** factors which informed such substantive responses was limited. That is, the survey responses provided little insight into the subjective

[4] The primary research study comparison related to an EOC (1993) report on TECs. See bibliography for details. In addition, some other points of comparison were made

motives and social processes which informed such responses within the organisation of TECs. In addition and relatedly, a further limitation turned on the inflexibility the method represented with regard to yielding data on the variety of such motives and processes which existed in and around TECs, as expressed by the numerous agents involved (eg. board directors, trainers, trainees etc.).

CASE STUDIES

By way of overcoming the limitations which the survey results presented in the above respects, the second and final prong of the study's research strategy hinged on the selection and in-depth investigation of a small number of TECs.

Rationale

The use of the case study method, and indeed whether the term 'case study' does delineate a distinctive research method in itself, has lately been subject to much debate within the social sciences (Platt, 1988; Hammerley,1992). This debate has in part been mapped around the putative dichotomy of positivist/quantitative versus interpretative/qualitative approaches to social research, with the case study approach tending to be located in the latter camp[5]. These debates are important, ongoing, and have been subject to detailed discussion elsewhere[6]. As a corollary, they will not be explored at length here. However, and with respect to this

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from newspapers reports.

[5] The validity of this divide has increasingly been challenged as overly simplistic by some commentators See Hammersley (1992) for example. Likewise, the ascription of the case study method to the interpretative/qualitative camp has also be questioned (see ibid.; Yin,1984; Hakim, 1987) .

[6] For of flavour of such discussions see Scott and Usher (1996) Understanding Educational Research (particularly chapter 4) and Ward Schofield in Hammersley (Ed.) (1993) Social Research: Philosophy, Politics and Practice.

study's research objectives, and more specifically its aim to illuminate the role that the social processes in and around TECs played in shaping their responses to gender equality issues, the advantages which qualitatively based case studies represented turned on two key factors.

The first factor related to the way in which it facilitated access to the various levels of TEC organisations and operations. In this way, case studies offered the potential for developing a more wholistic analysis of the issues under scrutiny. The flexibility which the method offers in this respect, and the particular merits this facility provides with respect to conducting research in organisational settings has been well noted (Yin, 1984; Hakim, 1987). In tandem with this, the qualitative basis of this study's case study investigation, which turned on in-depth interviewing, facilitated access to the subjective perspectives and motives of the social actors located within TEC organisations and operations. The facility that the case study approach offered in these two respects thereby facilitated a deeper and potentially more critical illumination and explanation of the issues explored by the project. That is, it provided a platform upon which to more fully engage with issues of social process at both a micro and macro level, and to explore the inter-play between the two (Platt, 1988; Yin, 1984).

Access and Selection

Involving case studies conducted in three different TECs, access to each of these was negotiated on the basis of

anonymity. In order to safeguard these guarantees, they will respectively be referred to as 'Mainstream', 'Token' and 'Dedmain' TEC in the chapters which follow[7].

Initial approaches for access were made to TEC Chief Executives by letter. This letter explained the way in which case studies were being conducted as a follow-up to the earlier questionnaire, and aimed to provide more comprehensive insights into women's participation in the training TECs co-ordinated[8]. Tending to represent the first strand of quite a long process of negotiation, this was particularly the case with one of the TECs studied. In tandem with this, another TEC which had initially agreed to participate in the case study stage of the research withdrew during the period in which interviews were being arranged; a withdrawal which was explained in terms of work pressures and internal reorganisation. Tending to underline the problems which TECs represent with respect to gaining research access to them, this characteristic has been noted elsewhere (Peck,1992).

Each of the three TECs subject to in-depth investigation were selected on the basis of information obtained from the survey

[7] Each of these pseudonyms were devised in order to reflect the form of internal support and organisation which the three TECs studied exhibited with regard to promoting EO for women within their respective operations. Thus 'Token' TEC manifested an essentially ad hoc and minimalist infra-structural approach, in contrast to the more comprehensive and systematic response exhibited by 'Mainstream'. The pseudonym of 'Dedmain' was applied to the third TEC studied in order to convey the process of change which characterised the infra-structural support it gave to EO. This process of change and transition coincided with the period in which the case study of the TEC was being conducted. Thus whilst it was initially selected because it evidenced a 'dedicated' response to the issue (ie. it employed a staffing resource dedicated to supporting and promoting equality concerns), this approach was abandoned in favour of devolving/mainstreaming responsibility for EO to all its staff.

[8] This characterisation was also deployed at the beginning of each interview, in order to broadly convey the general aim of the research without explicitly flagging-up issues of gender equality at the onset. It was felt that such a relatively neutral representation would facilitate more open responses on the part of interviewees.

stage of the study. Informed by two main criteria[9], the first hinged on the requirement that those selected had indicated the presence of at least one initiative specifically targeted towards women. Within this, efforts were taken to include at least one TEC which had indicated the presence of an initiative which involved non-traditional training provision. In this way, the selection of case-study TECs can be said to have been skewed towards those with a more pro-active record with regard to expanding women's training opportunities than this study's survey had found to be the case amongst TECs in general. The reason for this was informed by a desire to explore TEC rationales for inserting such initiatives within their operational remit, and also to provide a more effective benchmark against which to note any changes over time which might occur with respect to the priority they attached to such provision.

The second criterion related to the different forms of infra-structural support TECs exhibited with respect to supporting and expanding women's training opportunities within their operational remits. Thus for example, whilst survey responses suggested that some TECs had opted to employ a 'dedicated' EO staff, others had eschewed such responses in favour of other approaches. Aimed at eliciting the role that the various structures and processes which TECs had introduced played,

[9] The selection of case studies was informed by a further two sub-criteria. The first turned on the duration of operational activity manifest by each TEC. This involved the requirement that TECs selected for in-depth study had to have been operational for a period of at least one year at the commencement of the case study stage of this research. This proviso was inserted into the selection process in order to facilitate an investigation of substantive practice. The upshot of this precluded an investigation of TECs created during the final wave of TEC formation, whose operational live-span fell short of this requirement. The second sub-criteria was informed by the resource limitations of the study. More specifically, it related to the need to control the travelling and time costs incurred by the study. In order to

in terms of both expressing and safeguarding their commitments to promote greater opportunities for women within the training they co-ordinated, the various permutations which existed around this made it impossible to reflect the range which survey respondents suggested within the three case studies selected. However those which were studied did operate to suggest interesting points of similarity and difference.

The Interview Process

Largely compiled by a series of in-depth interviews, all of which were conducted during the latter nine months of 1992, a total of 36 interviews were conducted in the 3 TECs selected for investigation[10]. The length of interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours, with most lasting for about 1 hour. The vast majority of these were tape recorded, and were then selectively transcribed, along with any additional notes which had been taken at the time of interviews, in order to provide a more detailed record of the fieldwork.

Aimed at eliciting a wide range of perspectives on their organisation and operations with respect to the priority they each attached to promoting greater opportunities for women, interviewees included TEC senior and middle managers, board members, members of their equality staff, and training providers. Involving a semi-structured interview format, the design of this was aimed at generating information with regard to their respective involvement within each TEC, their

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achieve this, the TEC population eligible for case study investigation was confined to those located within a 3 hour travel-time radius of the research 'home-base'.

interest in EO and expanding women's opportunities specifically, and the extent to which the latter was felt to have been represented and supported by the TEC with which they were associated.

The politics and power relations embedded within the interview process has been subject to much debate and discussion within the social sciences. This tendency towards critical reflection has been particularly enriched and extended by feminist researchers (Oakley,1981; Finch, 1984). These accounts have operated to underline the way in which women's relative position of powerlessness in society has implications for women, both as researchers and as the subjects of research. The potential for women, as the subjects of research, to be exploited and disempowered, has thus been well documented and critiqued by feminist researchers in their efforts to develop anti-oppressive feminist methodologies (Mies,1993; Stanley,1990). Likewise, these accounts have also emphasised and underlined the ambiguities which characterise women's position as researchers. Whilst a major strand of this has turned on explicating the power dynamics embedded within feminist research projects concerned with illuminating various facets of women's social lives, the power dynamics evident within feminist research in which the subjects are men have also been explored (Layland, 1990).

The focus of this study, and the potentially sensitive nature of the issues under scrutiny, elicited a range of different

[10] . Prior to these, two pilot interviews had been conducted in another TEC.

interview dynamics. Moreover, whilst each interview involved its own inter-personal dynamic, there was nevertheless a tendency for these to be informed by issues around the structural and organisational position of interviewees, in tandem with their wider social identity. For example, interviews with TEC male board members and senior managers tended to exhibit a different dynamic to those conducted with female managers and board members. Thus the latter set of interviews tended to be characterised by more open, reflective and confidential responses. For example, one such manager, in addition to giving very freely of her time in interview provided a range of relevant internal documentation and photo-copies of newspaper coverage. This respondent, in common with one of the other female managers from another TEC, also phoned me on a number of occasions subsequent to the interview, with relevant pieces of information. The upshot of this was that a fairly regular and reciprocal dialogue developed between myself and these two women subsequent to the interview period.

In contrast, male senior managers and board members tended to be more controlling and evasive. This was particularly so in the case of one male board director, who constantly attempted to circumvent interview questions aimed at probing specific issues with regard to equal opportunities. Problems of apparent evasion, in this and other interviews, were in part addressed by rephrasing, repeating and/or returning to the question later in the interview. The same board member also tended to adopt a somewhat dismissive and patronising tone. The latter feature of the interview dynamic in part

turned on an explicit 'positioning' of the researcher in gender terms, with one response to a question aimed at probing his perspective on non-traditional forms of training being prefaced thus: 'what you girls or should I say females have to recognise'.

This feature of the interview process, in common with other dynamics whereby the board member quoted above and another senior male respondent made not only sexist but racist comments, was more difficult to address. This difficulty in large part turned on a tension between seeking to illuminate the subjective views and interpretations of respondents and a personal/political desire to challenge, what were sometimes extremely sexist and/or racist comments. The most frequent approach adopted in such instances centred on non-confrontational challenges aimed at probing the respondents rationale for making such comments, in tandem with suggesting and briefly outlining the existence of alternative perspectives.

In addition to individual interviews, and the various inter-personal dynamics these presented, group interviews were also conducted. This strand of the research process was focused on eliciting the perspectives of some of the women trainees participating on a small selection of the initiatives which the three TECs specifically targeted towards women. These interviews provided insights into why the women had participated in these initiatives. In addition, they also aimed to explore the opportunities the initiatives were perceived to represent from the perspective of the women who

took part within them. As a corollary, this set of interviews represented a crucial component of the research in that it provided a means of both accessing and incorporating the perspectives of women trainees themselves.

With the exception of two interviews, all the trainee interviews were organised on a group basis. The reason for this was partly practical, in that it minimised the disruption caused to the women and staff involved in each initiative. One of the draw-backs to this approach turned on the limited potential it provided to explore some of the points raised by the women trainees in more depth. More positively however, because the women involved had already established relationships with each other, the group interview situation seemed to generate a more relaxed atmosphere, which enhanced the development and flow of the discussion. For instance, in addition to responding to questions which I asked, the women trainees who participated in the group interviews raised questions of their own. These were in part directed towards me but also turned on probing each others experience of employment, training and family experience. This feature of the group interview process operated to expand the issues explored in interesting ways, and also seemed to be experienced very positively by the women trainees involved.

Strengths and Limitations of the Case Study Method

The data obtained from the case study interviews contributed towards the study in a number of way. The flexibility which the qualitative case study approach offered facilitated

access to various relevant agents located within the different levels of TEC operations and organisations, whilst simultaneously providing a platform upon which to explore the complex and sometimes conflicting social processes in and around the three different TECs studied, at both a micro and macro level. As a corollary, it enriched the explanatory potential of the study, by generating access to important forms of data which might otherwise have been under-explored.

Whilst the case study data made a significant contribution to the research findings, the time and resource limitations which circumscribed this strand of the research strategy did render the insights they could provide necessarily selective. That is, only a very small number of cases could be studied in sufficient depth to render data which was sufficiently meaningful. The upshot of this was that in-depth information on a large number of TECs was not generated. This feature necessarily has implications with respect to the generalizability of this study's case study findings to the TEC population as a whole. Moreover, of the three TECs subject to in-depth study, some inconsistencies with respect to the level of access it was possible to negotiate within these was encountered. Nevertheless, and mindful of these limitations, the flexibility and potential to engage in an in-depth investigation of the various social processes which shape TEC responses to gender (in)equality in training facilitated a deeper and more wholistic analysis of the inter-playing and complex issues involved in producing such responses. Further, whilst the findings elicited in this respect relate to the specificity of the three TECs subject

to in-depth scrutiny, the common themes and tensions identified within these three **might** also provide some illumination of similar processes which may be at play within other TECs[11].

CONCLUSION

The two types of methodology which informed this study's research strategy were selected in order to complement one another. The survey represented a mapping device through which to elicit a range of information on what TECs were doing, as a general population, to promote greater equality for women within the training they co-ordinated. By way of complementing and expanding on the survey findings in this respect, the case study strand of the research provided a mechanism by which to explore the complex social processes at work within a small number of TECs. In doing this, it presents a more in-depth analysis and illumination of the micro and macro level factors which inform the substantive responses to promoting gender equality which TECs manifest.

The findings generated by the research methods discussed above provide the basis for the Chapters which follow, the first of which turns on outlining what TECs as a general population are doing to promote greater equality for women in training. In doing this, it reports on the survey findings of the study.

[11] 'Might' and 'may' is used advisedly here, given problems of generalising from such a small number of cases. For further discussion of this point see Hammersley (1992).

TECs IN THE UK[1]

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter outlines the survey findings generated by the study. It includes a discussion of TEC board composition, sub-board and executive structures, funding, and the training they co-ordinate. Within this, an effort will be made to illuminate the extent to which concerns to promote greater opportunities for women are reflected within the TEC movement, at both an organisational and operational level. With respect to the former, insights into the number of women included within TEC boards will be provided, alongside a discussion of the degree of priority TECs appear to have attached to representing equal opportunity concerns within their sub-board and executive structures. Following on from this, the forms of training which TECs co-ordinate will be discussed, both with regard to the training programmes they co-ordinated for the unemployed and the initiatives they specifically targeted towards women, in order to assess the implications these suggest with respect to expanding women's training opportunities.

[1] .The UK Government's creation of the TEC movement was confined to England and Wales. Given the focus of the thesis, training systems in Scotland and Northern Ireland will therefore not be explored.

BOARD COMPOSITION

As noted above, TECs are required by Government to recruit at least two-thirds of their directors from senior level managers of local private sector enterprises. This provision is aimed at safe-guarding the Government's commitment to develop an employer-led training system. The implication of this is that non-private sector directors, recruited from senior figures within areas like the public sector and trade unions should have a minority presence on TEC boards. Beginning with a discussion of the employer to non-employer 'balance' on TEC boards, this section moves onto explore their employer-side representation, and closes by considering the male to female balance they exhibit at board level.

Employer and Non-Employer Directors

The in-built bias towards the private sector which the Government imposed on TECs means that they were required to recruit no more that one-third of their board membership from the non-business sector. In practice TECs have tended to recruit less than one-third of their board members from this sector, with figures on the numbers of non-business board members of 79 TEC boards indicating that members from trade unions and the public sector comprised only 22.2% of all board members, with less than 2% of non-private sector board members coming from the voluntary sector. As a corollary, TECs have tended to exceed the minimum two-third employer board memberships quota stipulated by Government, with about

three-quarters of their board membership being recruited from senior private sector employers (F.T.,2.5.91).

The results of this study's survey of TECs provide general support for these earlier findings. Whilst indicating a slightly higher participation rate for members recruited from outside the private sector, suggesting such members accounted for 29% (n=184) of TEC directors, it is nevertheless important to note that this figure still falls below the maximum allowed by Government.

A sectoral breakdown of TEC non-private board directors revealed that members recruited from Local Authorities, who accounted for 48% (n=88), constituted the majority, with the next largest constituents coming from City Council representatives and trade unions. This suggests that TECs do not seem intent on broadening their directoral base by achieving the maximum number of non-private sector members which Government constraints would allow. In this respect, there was an apparent tendency to privilege the role of employers by further compounding the marginalisation of other interest groups. Such a feature can be seen as potentially problematic with respect to ensuring senior level support to promote equal opportunity initiatives within TEC operations.

A British Institute of Management survey of 70,000 of its members, for example, indicated that despite legal exhortations to adopt equal opportunities policies aimed stimulating voluntary action, only 30% of its members had

adopted such policies within their own enterprises (1989 cited Dickens, 1989:169). Likewise, survey results of 500 companies into the strategies they deployed in order promote equal opportunities for women workers can be seen to evoke similar concerns. Resulting in a listing of 50 companies which seemed to manifest the most proactive response to the issue, this indicated that whilst only one of these lacked an equal opportunities policy, only 25 of these had engaged in positive action programmes, which ranged from setting recruitment targets through to the promotion of women-only training courses. Moreover, it appeared that public sector employers included within this list were more proactive with regard to this type of initiative than private sector employers. Only 3 out of 9 of the best engineering and manufacturing employers indicated the presence of positive action initiatives. In contrast, 7 out of 9 of the best public sector employers, which included the civil service, local government and various City Councils, suggested the presence of such initiatives (MccGwire, 1992).

The extent to which the private sector and employer-led nature of TEC boards can be assumed to ensure senior level support for developing equality initiatives for women within the operational remit of TECs is thereby open to contestation. Further concerns turn on the bias towards certain types of employers which TECs have incorporated within their board structures. Revealing a tendency for TECs to appoint employer directors from large manufacturing firms, the results of this study's survey suggested that 60% of TEC employer directors had been recruited from large firms, two-

thirds of whom had come from large manufacturing firms. The identity of the 'typical' private sector board member therefore seems to be associated with large-scale enterprises and disproportionately tied to the manufacturing sector.

The tendency for TECs to marginalise small employers within their board structures has been noted elsewhere. A national survey conducted by the Federation of Small Businesses argued that small businesses were under-represented on the boards of over half of the 63 TECs who responded to its survey (cited **F.T.**, 30.6.92). Furthermore, in addition to their under-representation on TEC boards, it seems that small firms tend to have a rather tenuous relationship with TECs more generally. Research conducted in 1992 suggested that fewer than 1 in 10 small businesses had used their local TEC, whilst a study conducted by one London TEC indicated that less than 20% of small employers in the area it covered actually knew about the TEC's existence (**Guardian**, 19.7.93).

The implications of the apparent marginalisation of small employers within the TEC project suggests an important gender dimension. As noted above, women employees tended to be disproportionately located in small enterprises. In addition, as also indicate above, women located in such enterprises are less likely to receive training than women working in larger firms. As a corollary, the marginalisation of small firms within the TEC movement suggests the possibility that the training needs of the large numbers of women working within these enterprises are likely to remain neglected.

Moreover, whilst the need to more fully respond to the employment and training needs of women located within small firms appeared to be emphasised by Opportunity 2000, the means by which it aimed to extend the Initiative's influence to small employers was rendered somewhat paradoxical. Thus, whilst noting the Initiative's bias towards large employers, Opportunity 2000's organiser argued that the contacts which TECs had with small employers would provide a mechanism by which to overcome this neglect (**Guardian**,27.10.1992). Given that TECs themselves appear to have rather tenuous contacts with small employers, their ability to provide such a mechanism can thereby be seen as rather contentious.

Under-Representation of Women and Ethnic Minority Groups at Board Level

The marginalisation of women and ethnic minority members at board level raises further concerns. TEC boards comprise of between 9 and 15 members. However, the first 36 operational TECs contained a total of only 40 female members (cited Peck and Emmerich,1990:3). This pattern of under-representation was even more apparent with regard to the recruitment of board member from ethnic minorities. For instance, a second study of 15 TECs conducted by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) indicated a total presence of only three members recruited from ethnic minorities (ibid.). Moreover, such patterns of under-representation amongst the first wave of TECs to become operational proved to be equally characteristic of the 82 TECs which currently comprise the

movement as a whole. This point was noted in Parliamentary debate:

> Women and ethnic minorities are under-represented on TEC boards. Of 1,136 directors in the 82 TECs, only 10.7% were women and a mere 3.5% from an ethnic minority backgrounds[2] (Hansard 26.11.91).

Such a pattern of under-representation was evident in the findings of this study. The overwhelming majority of the TECs who responded to the survey indicated that they had no more than two women at board level. Of these 41% reported that they had two female board members, while 46% of TECs indicated that they had only one woman at board level. This can perhaps in part be seen to suggest a tendency for TECs to attach a relatively low priority to recruiting significant numbers of women at board level. However the pattern of under-representation it signals can perhaps also be seen as an artefact of the qualification criteria which Government imposed with regard to the senior status of both TEC employer and non-employer directors. Militating against the inclusion of women at TEC board level, given the above noted tendency for men to predominate in such senior positions, this pattern of predominance is particularly evident within the private sector.

Despite the tendency which TECs exhibited to marginalise a range of different interests within their board structures, this seemed to evoke little concern. Seventy-six per cent of

[2] . For a more in-depth and up to date exploration of TECs' record with regard to representing the interests of ethnic minority groups, both with regard to their

TECs who responded to this survey indicated that they felt their board structures were largely representative of the areas they covered. Moreover, while 46% of TECs did indicate they would like to change their board composition in order to better reflect their locality, just under half indicated that they wanted to change or increase the role of the private sector within their structures. In contrast, less than a quarter of TECs suggested that they wanted to recruit more non-private sector representatives and/or were aiming to recruit more female directors at board level. Most TECs therefore seem to believe their board membership is largely representative of the geographical areas covered, with the in-built bias towards the private sector, and the under-representation of women on board structures being largely regarded as unproblematic.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY SUB-BOARD LEVEL GROUPS, STAFF AND POLICIES

Whilst issues around the composition of TEC boards seemed to represent an important point of convergence with regard to the majority of the TECs surveyed, points of divergence became apparent. This became clear in a consideration of the variety of sub-board level groups, staffing resources and policies which different TECs had developed with regard to promoting equal opportunities.

Sub-Board Level Groups

All of the TECs who responded to this study's survey either had, or were attempting to develop, sub-board level

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internal organisation and operational remit, see Boddy, M. (1995) **TECs and Racial Equality**

structures aimed at incorporating a wider range of interests and opinions within their structures and organisation. The variety of such sub-board level structures meant that responses could not be meaningfully codified. However results suggested that they were most frequently organised on a geographic, issue-related or sectoral and/or industrial basis. This meant that TECs contained a combination of some or all of these features.

The number and remit of such groups varied considerably between TECs, with some TECs having only one or two sub-board level structures, while others had more complex arrangements. Responses therefore ranged from:

> (i) 1 group, an Equal Opportunity Advisory Panel
>
> (ii) 2 Advisory groups, each covering a Local Authority area [which]consist of business sector representatives, Heads of school and colleges, Local Authority elected members and staff, and voluntary sector workers

to:

> (iii) 8 committees: Construction, Manufacturing, Textiles, Personnel Forum, Equal Opportunities, Education, Enterprise and Small Firms, Voluntary Sector
>
> (iv) 4 Area Groups,each containing approximately 15 people. Roughly half are employers and half are other interests. 10 Employer Sector Groups. All groups advise on particular aspects of the local labour market and TEC operation.

As these examples suggest, some TECs included groups specifically concerned with issues of equal opportunities at sub-board level, with survey findings revealing that just over a half of respondents either had or planned to implement an equal opportunity committee or advisory group at this level of their organisation. Over half of these involved groups with a general EO remit which included women, whilst 10 indicated the presence or anticipation of a group

specifically concerned with representing and promoting women's interests. In one case, this involved the formation of a 'Women's Initiative Group' which had allocated itself the following and relatively wide ranging terms of reference:

> (i) To generate ideas and initiatives which will encourage women in [the area] to enter and remain in employment, and help them overcome social and cultural barriers in employment
>
> (ii)To suggest ways in which the attitudes of [employers in this area] to their female employees, or potential employees, can be positively changed, and to raise employers' awareness of equal opportunities issues and the potential beneficial effects on recruitment and retention of staff
>
> (iii)To promote flexible working practices and encourage employers to implement policies that allow women to enter employment offering quality training and career structures
>
> (iv) To influence the activities of the [TEC] and seek to influence national training policy so that women can derive maximum benefit from the full range of services available through the TEC and other training provision
>
> (v) The evaluate training provision for women by the TEC, including provision designed primarily for women, and to suggest ways in which such provision can be improved or changed to make it more relevant to their needs
>
> (vi) To influence the TECs own staffing policies such that they may serve as a role model for other employers in [the area]
>
> (Women's EO Strategy Document, 1991)[3]

The Employment of 'Dedicated' Equal Opportunity Staff

Whilst just over half of the TECs surveyed indicated the presence of equal opportunity sub-board level groups, TECs varied considerably over the question of whether they had drawn upon their staffing budget in order to employ 'dedicated' equal opportunities staff, with the majority

[3] Both the questionnaire and case study stages of the research where informed by guarantees of anonymity. As a result, the various internally produced documents

opting not to dedicate TEC resources to the employment of such staff. Thus only 24% of TECs surveyed indicated that they employed or planned to employ one or more dedicated EO officers. As a corollary, three-quarters of TECs neither had nor planned to dedicate some of their staffing resource to this area. The case study findings provide further insights into this issue, whilst at the same time raising questions around the extent to which a dedicated approach can in itself be read as manifesting a long-term commitment to support EO.

Equal Opportunity Policies and Strategies

All respondents indicated that they had an equal opportunities policy. An examination of a sample of these policies and/or other related documents revealed wide variation between TECs in terms of their respective scope and content. To illustrate the range of coverage, one statement referred to the TEC's formally expressed commitment to 'the pursuit of equality for all in every area of its activity', without specifying the strategies by which they might be implemented.

Whilst most of the equal opportunity policy statements enclosed tended to represent variations on the above example, some respondents also included information on the equal opportunity sub-board groups they had implemented. A number indicated that they either had or intended to target particular groups of women within their training provision. One such TEC, which suggested targeting women-returners

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referred to in this chapter and the chapters which follow cannot be directly attributed beyond indicating the general source and date of the document cited.

figured prominently within its equal opportunity strategy, included its guide to staff on equal opportunities, which emphasised the economic importance of developing equal opportunities, by quoting Micheal Howard, the then Secretary for Employment:

> Equal Opportunities makes good business sense because, in an increasingly competitive market place, employers need to make the fullest possible use of all the talent available to them.

The rationale for promoting equal opportunities as an economic as opposed to social priority is something which was clearly stated within the advice which the Employment Department issued to TECs on how to define an EO strategy in its Guide to Planning in 1989 (see also Chapter Three). Both echoing and reinforcing this within its subsequent guide to **Developing Good Practice in Equal Opportunities** (1990), economic and demographic considerations were again stressed. Recommending the development and implementation of equal opportunities to TECs, it was thereby argued that the need for this stemmed not only from a desire:

> to avoid unlawful discrimination under legislation on sex and race...[but also] and more positively [because] the changing nature of the workforce - in particular the shrinking number of school-leavers - meant that it was more important than ever to make maximum use of the latent talents of all sections in the community (Employment Department,1990:2)

The influence of such economic concerns on shaping the commitments which TECs expressed to promoting greater opportunities for women within the training they co-ordinated was suggested by the survey findings of this study. Two-thirds of the TECs who indicated that they either had or planned to implement training initiatives specifically

targeted at women emphasised economic as opposed to social rationales for this policy. Most frequently, this involved either implicit or explicit reference to demographic factors.

One TEC responded by arguing that its specific targeting of women had been prompted by a recognition that 'women [were] a largely untapped resource. By 1995 half the workforce will be women'. A second suggested that, '90% of the increase in the workforce in the 1990's will be met by women [and] there are low female participation rates in [this area]'. Likewise another TEC drew attention to a section in its equal opportunity policy, which argued:

> Although the demographic downturn will result in a decline by almost a quarter of 16-19 year-olds by 1994, the workforce will continue to grow by 100,000 a year. Of this expansion, 90% will be women. Demographic factors therefore make it essential that women in employment are trained, and that those returning to the workplace are encouraged to update their skills

Operating to further underline the priority which TECs give to employer needs, this emphasis on equal opportunities as an issue of economic concern is potentially problematic in the sense that it potentially makes its promotion and pursuit contingent on labour market demand. As a corollary, it is possible that the need and demand for greater equality in training and employment which women voice as a right in and of itself may become subsumed within efforts to meet the skill needs expressed by employers. Such needs often reflect pervasive processes of gender stereo-typing. The extent to which the presence of skill shortages per se can be relied upon to break down such ingrained processes of gender stereo-

typing is therefore questionable (Dickens, 1989) Equally significant, such contingent responses to developing greater opportunities for women also begs the question of what happens when the apparent economic push of labour and skill shortages becomes muted by the short term implications of recession.

FUNDING AND TRAINING PRIORITIES

The point remains, however, that TECs are able to exercise a degree of autonomy from Government and to develop distinct policies. This relates to issues around the sub-board level structures which TECs adopt. It also involves decisions to include or eschew the option of employing staff dedicated to the pursuit of equal opportunities, and to the range and scope of equal opportunity policies and strategies. In addition, and to a lesser extent, it extends to the composition of their boards.

However, the degree of autonomy which TECs are able to exert with regard to funding the training they co-ordinate is more restricted and circumscribed by the training priorities which Government has imposed upon them, and the series of funding cuts it has instituted. Whilst TECs have been granted some limited flexibilities geared towards ameliorating the impact of the latter, significant levels of resentment remained amongst TECs with regard to funding and the restrictions which Government had imposed. Seventy-four percent of respondents in this survey suggested that lack of funding and/or funding inflexibilities represented the main problem which confronted them. Furthermore, as will be seen below,

the implications of these restrictions and funding problems, when married to the ways in which TECs have used the limited flexibilities they have been granted within their Government funding, raises a number of questions around the potential of TECs to generate greater opportunities for women within the training they co-ordinate.

As noted above, the Government's funding of TECs is divided into five blocks: Youth Training (YT), Adult Training (ET), business and enterprise programmes, Local Initiative Funds (LIF) and management budgets. Contractually obliged to meet Government guarantees of training to the young and adult registered unemployed on YT and ET, this commitment absorbs around 90% of their budgets. As a corollary, the obligations which TECs have to meet Government training guarantees to the young and adult unemployed play an important part in determining the types of trainee they prioritise.

TECs are contractually obliged to guarantee YT training to the young unemployed aged 16-18. The Government's guarantee to the adult unemployed on ET covers those aged 18-24, who have been registered as unemployed for between 6 to 12 months. This group is given first priority with respect to the ET TECs co-ordinate, with second priority being attached to adults falling within the Government's 'aim' group. This category of ET trainees includes, amongst others, people aged between 18 and 49 who have been registered as unemployed for more than two years. Because certain groups like women returners are less likely to be eligible for unemployment benefit, and therefore tend not to register as unemployed,

such groups of women tend to be precluded from both the ET 'guarantee' and 'aim' group. As a result, they thereby fail to qualify for ET training. Moreover, whilst TECs can include women-returners who are not registered as unemployed within the ET they co-ordinate, their scope to do this is conditional upon TECs having met the needs of those included within their priority groups.

The emphasis which ET places on the registered unemployed has been present since the launch of the scheme. This can be said to have conditioned the relatively low levels of participation women have tended to have within it. Nationally women comprise around one-third of the scheme's participants. This figure nevertheless operates to mask significant levels of local difference, which reveal a tendency for women's access to ET to vary in inverse proportion to local unemployment rates. Consequently, women are most likely to have access to ET in areas with relatively low levels of unemployment (EOC, 1991:49).

TECs emerged during a period in which unemployment rates were rising significantly. In addition, they were subject to a series of Government budget cuts, the upshot of which was that some experienced problems with respect to meeting the training guarantees of those falling within their training priority groups. The survey responses of this study underlined this point, with 7 TECs indicating they were unlikely to be able to meet their training guarantees during the current year of their operations. In addition, one case study TEC suggested that the problems which the movement

faced in this regard were more wide-spread than this figure, and newspaper coverage, suggested. Given this background, it appears doubtful that the TEC movement will be able to extend their ET to groups like women returners in any significant degree in the short-term.

The demands of raising levels of unemployment, in tandem with the funding cuts which Government had imposed on TECs, potentially operated to further restrict the already limited access that groups like women returners had to ET. However, the Out-Put Related (ORF) criteria which Government had specified with regard to women returners on ET seemed likely to restrict this even more. Thus although TECs receipt of ORF for the bulk of their ET trainees was contingent upon trainees obtaining a job, in order for TECs to receive ORF for women returners on ET, evidence of both a job and a qualification were required. Consequently, this acted as potential disincentive for TECs to include women returners within their ET programmes (of which more below).

Whilst both of the above limitations can been said to be conditioned by the impact of Government imposed restrictions, a further hurdle which was likely to confront women excluded from ET priority groups turned on the way in which TECs had used their discretion to restrict the payment of child-care allowance to those within their ET guarantee group. In exercising this discretion, only half of the TECs surveyed had opted to maintain support for child-care costs for those not included in their ET guarantee. In the absence of such allowances, the participation of women returners with child-

care responsibilities within ET was thereby made contingent on their ability to fund their own child-care costs. The upshot of these various factors suggested that women returners in some areas might be confronted by three barriers in their efforts to gain access to ET. Their participation on ET was therefore not only likely to be mediated by local levels of unemployment and the potential disincentive which ORF represented to TECs with respect to incorporating women returners within their ET, but was also likely to be conditioned by the stance which their local TEC took on the payment of child-care allowance to groups falling outside its ET guarantee group.

The way in which some TECs had exercised their discretionary powers with respect to limiting their liability for child-care costs on ET appears likely to impede the already limited access that groups like women returners have to the scheme. However, the way in which the Councils exercised their broader discretionary powers, with respect to the flexibilities they had been granted by Government, raised questions with regard to the quality of training which women returners and other groups of women were likely to experience once included within the scheme.

Exercising Local Flexibilities

Like the Training Agency (TA) area offices which they superseded, TECs are not the direct providers of training but instead subcontract training to local training providers. However, unlike TA area offices, TECs have been granted some flexibilities with regard to programme design, and in

relation to the movement of funding both within and between blocks. As noted above, the Government's granting of these flexibilities coincided with the budget cuts it had imposed on TECs.

In order to make more effective use of the diminished funds which TECs had at their disposal, they were granted powers to reduce the length of training entitlement on the programmes they co-ordinate for the unemployed. In addition they were given some discretion with respect to shifting funding within blocks and, if training guarantees have been met, to move funding between blocks up to a set maximum of 5%.

Providing a facility by which TECs might generate operational surpluses which could be deployed in other areas of their activity, the development of such surpluses hinged on the way in which TECs restructured their YT and ET provision. The survey results of this study indicated that just under 70% of TEC either had, or planned to, reduce the length of training entitlement for their unemployed trainees. There was also some suggestion that ET provided the main focus for this. In addition, just under a quarter of respondents indicated that they either had or were planning to introduce a system of 'flexible funding', 6 of whom had also, or were intending to, reduce the length of courses they co-ordinated.

Based on a recognition that some forms of training cost more than others, 'flexible funding' enabled TECs to reflect this within their payments to their training providers. As a corollary, rather than paying all training providers the

same, payments could be stratified in order to reflect the fact that some forms of training in areas like engineering and technology were more capital intensive than training in occupational areas like service, care and health.

The positive dimension of flexible funding appeared to hinge upon the facility it provided to generate greater financial resources with which TECs could expand their funding of more costly forms of training in technical, craft and related occupations. However the tendency for women to be concentrated in labour as opposed to capital intensive occupations (West,1990) does raise the concern that, unless married with a commitment to promote the greater participation of women in such 'non-traditional' and capital intensive forms of occupational training, TECs' utilisation of flexible-funding may have the effect of shifting training funds away from women and towards men. Moreover, even if such mechanisms were introduced, the potential danger for the system to generate a two-tier system in which some training areas increasingly assumed a 'Cinderella' status as the funding for these was reduced in order to fund other forms of occupational training, would seem to be apparent.

The implications of the various forms of restructuring which TECs had or were in the process of implementing were difficult to ascertain on the basis of the survey responses alone. Moreover, while the potential gender implications around the operation of 'flexible funding' would require more in-depth and long-term investigation (something which was precluded by the time and resource limitations of this

study), it is nevertheless perhaps useful to raise these concerns whilst emphasising their speculative nature. However, on a more substantive note, it would seem that reducing the length of training entitlement, without wide scale efforts to increase the training content of the time that remains, is unlikely to enhance the already poor reputation which ET had prior to TECs assuming responsibility for it (of which more in Chapter 6).

Other Sources of Funding: Internal and External

The way in which TECs deploy their YT and ET budgets provides the potential for them to generate operational surpluses, some of which could be used to fund initiatives targeted towards women. In addition to the targeted use of surplus funding, two additional sources of funding were identified with regard to promoting the development of training initiatives specifically aimed at women. The first of these involved drawing upon the Local Initiative Funds (LIF) which TECs received from Government, whilst the latter was generated from external sources via TEC applications for European Social Funding (ESF).

Local Initiative Funds represent a relatively small segment of the overall budget which TECs' receive. Calculated on the basis of local population levels (up to a set maximum of £500,000), the survey findings of the study suggested this provided the primary mechanism through which training initiatives specifically targeted towards women were funded. However, the potential for this funding source to provide the basis for developing a wide range of training options for

women is limited by its relatively small scale and by the competing demands which are likely to be made upon it.

In contrast, the funding potentially available to TECs for training initiatives targeted towards women via their application to the European Social Fund (ESF) is of a far greater magnitude. Administered on a matched-funding basis, ESF is organised around set priority objectives, which include facilitating women's entry into occupational areas in which they are under-represented.

Whilst indirectly benefiting from the European funding which the Employment Department receives; funding which contributes to the costs of the YT and ET training which TEC co-ordinate, TECs can also directly bid to the ESF. Potentially representing a means by which they could receive part-funding for training projects aimed at challenging the inequalities which women currently experience within the labour market, the survey findings of the study suggested this potential was largely unrealised by the overwhelming majority of TECs. Thus only two of those surveyed had successfully bid for such European funding in order to support the training initiatives they had implemented for women, whilst a further three indicated their intention to bid for European Social Funding in the future. These findings tend to underline and support the EOC's (1993) conclusion that TECs appeared to lack an awareness of the possibilities represented by the ESF for funding equal opportunity initiatives for women in training.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN YT AND ET, AND THE TRAINING INITIATIVES SPECIFICALLY TARGETED TOWARDS WOMEN

No specific funds were dedicated to the provision of equal opportunity training initiatives for women within the Government's funding of TECs. Consequently, the promotion of greater opportunities for women within the YT and ET training they co-ordinate is contingent on attempts to increase the participation of women within these schemes, in tandem with efforts to pursue strategies by which to promote women's participation in a wider range of the occupational training such schemes offer. In addition, TECs can deploy the various other sources of funding referred to above in order to develop initiative's outside of their YT and ET training, specifically targeted towards women. The scale of such initiatives is nevertheless likely to be circumscribed by the limited funds available.

The extent to which TECs pursue either or both of these options can in part be seen as conditional on the degree of priority and commitment which they attach to the issue of generating greater equality for women in training within their operational remits. As noted above, these levels of priority and commitment appeared to vary considerably between TECs with regard to issues of representation at board level, sub-board and executive infra-structural support for equal opportunities, and in terms of the policies they manifest in this regard. The upshot of these combined processes appears

to have generated a mosaic of provision which, when assessed on a national scale, suggests inconsistencies and fragmentation.

Training for the Unemployed: YT and ET

Whilst large numbers of women participate in YT and ET training, they nevertheless constitute a minority on both forms of provision. Comprising 40% of YT participants , women constitute only 34% of ET trainees on a national scale (EOC,1993:6). Moreover, and for reasons noted above, it seems unlikely that the TEC movement as a whole will provide a mechanism by which to challenge women's under-representation on the latter.

Furthermore, as also noted above, both YT and ET have overwhelmingly operated to reflect and reinforce occupational gender-stereotyping (EOC, 1993). Underlining this, the survey finding of this study suggested pervasive patterns of sexual segregation in the training which TECs co-ordinated for the unemployed. Thus when asked to list the three occupational areas in which women on YT and ET were most frequently trained, respondents indicated the tendency for female trainees to be concentrated in clerical/secretarial, retail and the personal service areas. Similarly, when asked to produce an equivalent list for male trainees, construction and engineering were most commonly cited.

In an effort to challenge patterns of gender stereotyping in YT and ET, some TECs indicated the presence of 'sampling' opportunities within the training they co-ordinated in this

respect, whereby both male and female trainees were encouraged to pursue taster options in traditional and non-traditional forms of occupational training prior to making a commitment to pursue a specific training course. This, together with setting targets aimed at gradually increasing the participation of men and women in non-traditional forms of occupational training, represented the primary means by which TECs were attempting to challenge gender stereotyping within the YT and ET they co-ordinated.

However, only a minority of TECs either had or planned to pursue such strategies. Only 22% of respondents indicated the presence of, or plan to implement, 'sampling' opportunities, whilst slightly less suggested they either had or intended to introduce targets aimed at increasing the participation of male and female trainees in non-traditional areas. The upshot of this would seem to be that the overwhelming tendency for ET and YT to operate as a mechanism which channelled women trainees into traditionally female and relatively low-paid occupations was likely to remain unchallenged by the majority of TECs.

Training Specifically Targeted Towards Women Outside YT and ET

In addition to the training provision which women receive on YT and ET, TECs co-ordinated a range of courses targeted towards women which were funded from outside their main block funding. Seventy-six percent this survey's respondents indicated that they either were, or intended to, target

training initiatives toward women in order to increase their participation in the training they co-ordinated.

Of those TECs which indicated the presence, or intention to implement, one or more training initiatives specifically targeted towards women, just under two-thirds suggested that such initiatives either were or would involve targeting training towards particular groups of women. Within this, women returners were most frequently cited, whilst 13% of TECs indicated their commitment to target training towards women from ethnic minorities. In addition, a further two TECs referred to the specific needs of women with on-going care responsibilities for elderly relatives, while one referred to home-workers and another mentioned female single-parents.

Taken as a whole, the training which TECs co-ordinated for women outside their YT and ET remit reflected a wide variety of provision aimed at developing a number of different skills and capabilities. Whilst some of these were focused around traditionally female occupations, others involved efforts to facilitate women's access to occupations in which they were traditionally under-represented, whilst others were less vocationally specific in the sense that they involved confidence and assertiveness training, or 'return to learn' options provided by local Further Education colleges. Examples of some of these are listed below:

i. Women into Information Technology: courses designed to introduce and update IT skills, targeted towards women returners

ii.Women Back into Work: clerical training with a confidence building component

iii.Enterprising Women: aimed at encouraging women to become self-employed.

iv.Women into Management

v. Women Technicians into Engineering and Sciences

vi.Moving On: includes assertiveness, management and business skills training

vii.Return to Learn: courses are run with local F.E. colleges.

Some of the examples included in the above list evidence the way in which some of the training which TECs targeted towards women aimed at increasing their participation in occupational areas in which they are traditionally under-represented. However only a minority of TECs indicated that they co-ordinated such initiatives, despite the fact that such initiatives were sanctioned by the UK's anti-sex discrimination legislation with regard to vocational education and training.

Thus of the respondents who indicated the presence of initiatives targeted specifically towards women, only a quarter referred to initiatives aimed at encouraging women to enter non-traditional occupations. Within this, initiatives aimed at encouraging women to enter management were most frequently cited. Others referred to training in higher level Information and other Technology areas, engineering and construction. Although significant in the sense that such initiatives potentially operated to challenge

pervasive patterns of gender stereo-typing, the fact that the majority of TEC respondents did not include such initiatives within their training remit suggests that the potential of the TEC movement as a whole to contribute towards challenging such patterns of sexual segregation within the training they co-ordinated appeared to be limited.

CONCLUSION

An investigation of the training initiatives which TECs co-ordinate for women outside of their YT and ET remit suggests a patchwork of provision which is subject to considerable local variations. Moreover whilst the majority of TECs either were or intended to co-ordinate at least one such initiative, only a minority were found to be co-ordinating training aimed at increasing women's participation in non-traditional occupations.

Similar points apply to women's inclusion on the YT and ET which TECs co-ordinate. Thus whilst acknowledging the presence of pervasive patterns of sexual segregation within these schemes, only a minority of TECs either had or planned to implement strategies aimed at challenging these patterns. Furthermore, and having implications for both the female and male participants included within these programmes, the tendency for TECs to reduce the length of these programmes, suggests the possibility that the reputation for offering low quality training which has tended to plague these programmes is likely to continue.

The potential and commitment of the TEC movement as a whole to promote greater equality for women within their operational remit is thus questioned. This point can be applied to both the substantive forms of training they co-ordinate, and to the levels of internal support they attached to this. Nevertheless it appeared that some TECs accorded greater priority to this issue than others. In an effort to provide greater insights into the differences which exist between TECs in this regard, and the factors which can be said to have informed this, the following three Chapters report on the findings of case studies conducted in three different TECs.

CHAPTER SIX

THREE TECs AT WORK: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT[1]

INTRODUCTION

The three TECs subject to in-depth investigation provide the focus for this Chapter. It will outline information on their respective size, funding, staffing, and organisational structures[2]. In tandem with this, a brief sketch of the industrial make-up of the geographical areas which each covered will be provided. This will be complemented by an examination of their organisational ethos, which will point to the differences and similarities between the TECs, in order provide a context against which to locate the findings reported in the following two chapters.

'MAINSTREAM' TEC[3]

Formed in 1990, 'Mainstream' TEC was amongst the first wave of TECs to become operational. The largest of the three studied, it had a budget in excess of £40 million. This was seen by the TEC's management as giving a degree of autonomy

[1] . In line with the guarantees of anonymity which were made to each of the three case study TECs, their real names will not be referred to in this Chapter or in the Chapters which follow on from it. Instead, they will respectively be referred to as 'Mainstream', 'Token' and 'Dedmain' TEC. Likewise, and again mindful of the guarantees of anonymity which were made of interviewees in each case study, direct quotes from interviews will only be attributed in order to convey the structural position of interviewees with regard to the TEC they were respectively associated with. All of the interviews for the study were conducted during the last nine months of 1992.

[2] Because information relating to the way in which each TEC had sought to represent Equal Opportunity concerns within their internal organisation provides the focus of Chapter Eight, references to these have been purposely precluded from this Chapter.

[3] Unless stated otherwise, information relating to the local labour market covered by this and the other two case study TECs was taken from the labour market assessments they had each produced.

that was felt to be less readily available to smaller TECs. The crux of this assessment related to the way in which the relatively large size of its budget was felt to enhance its potential to generate operational surpluses:

> You generate operational surpluses on the amount of training weeks you deliver within your budget. ..So for example, my budget for YT this year was £15 million. Now somebody else's [in a smaller TEC] might be £5 million or £2 million. Think about how many training weeks I can buy for £15 million and they can buy for £5 or £2 million. Now on each training week you can generate a surplus for development costs and obviously the bigger your budget, the more operational surplus you can generate, which enables you to diversify into other areas so long you meet your guarantees.
> (Senior Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

These surpluses gave the TEC a degree of assurance with regard to its ability to shape a local identity characterised by a relative degree of autonomy from the funding and training priorities which Government had imposed. Concretely, this was expressed by a restructuring of some of the forms of training for the unemployed which it had inherited from the TA.

Suggesting a tension between these programmes, which it perceived as representing a political palliative to high levels of unemployment, and longer-term objectives concerned with skill investment and development, the Chief Executive outlined the TEC's position on this:

> We believe, firmly and very squarely, that the TEC is here for a strategic purpose. It is not here to do short-term measures to relieve unemployment, its here to develop medium to long-term strategies designed to improve the overall skills and economic well-being of the city.
> (Chief Executive, 'Mainstream' TEC).

One of its senior managers suggested the way in which this tension, and its commitment to the latter, had informed the

changes it had implemented within ET. Consequent changes which had been achieved via its deployment of some of the Government granted flexibilities referred to above. Identifying the role that he had played in designing the original ET during his employment with the MSC, and the implicit rationale that had informed it, he went onto to suggest:

> As far as ET is concerned, we completely reshaped it. The funding we inherited was originally the old Employment Training, which was a programme designed to pay as little money as possible and to cram as many people through as possible. I say this with knowledge and experience because I helped to develop it...[Trainers) weren't paid on the basis of quality or whether people got a qualification. All that has changed, and TECs are now managed and assessed on the basis of out-puts...So what we decided to do was take the whole [ET] block budget, it breaks into two parts. There is the bit for allowances and the bit which is paid to providers. Within our contract we are allowed to treat that as one block. Our strategy was to free-up the allowances side by developing a range of ET which is linked to shorter, higher quality courses ranging from 15 to 38 weeks. This allowed us to push some of the allowance resource down to training providers, and to redirect any remaining surplus to other areas we wanted to develop.
> (Senior Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

Enhancing the TEC's ability to generate operational surpluses, the use of such flexibilities were thus not only perceived as providing scope for diversification but were also said to have been used to improve the quality of training co-ordinated for its ET trainees[4].

In consequence of the relatively large scale of its budget, 'Mainstream's' staffing resource was significantly greater than the other two TECs studied. It employed a total of 89

[4] It is perhaps nevertheless important to note they way in which 'Mainstream's' rationale in this respect is essentially predicated upon making a virtue out of necessity. That is, a more ideal scenario, contingent on adequate funding, can perhaps

staff, the overwhelming majority being Civil Service secondees, some of whom either had or were in the process of shifting their employment status in order to become permanent members of 'Mainstream' TEC's staff.

Observations made during various visits to the TEC's office suggested that its employment structures tended to reflect the gender hierarchies apparent within the Civil Service (Bagihole,1994:73), in that female staff seemed to outnumber men significantly within lower grade positions equivalent to Administrative Assistant and Administrative Officer. However more substantive investigations revealed that this mirroring process was less apparent within 'Mainstream's' senior management structures. Thus three out of its eight senior managers were female (equivalent Senior Executive Officer grade 7). In addition, women constituted just over half of the TEC's middle managers, a small number of whom were reported to work on a flexi-time basis.

There was a positive assessment of the opportunities for occupational advancement which 'Mainstream' TEC offered to its female employees against what one of its female Senior Managers perceived as a less open employment structure within the Civil Service. This Manager, who had been recruited from a Training Agency Area office, nevertheless suggested that such opportunities were likely to incur a potential cost at more senior levels; a cost which, in her case, had been ameliorated by what she described as a '50/50

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be said to hinge on maintaining the length of provision together with greater investment geared towards improving the quality of training co-ordinated.

split' which existed between her and her partner with regard to family responsibilities. Her decision to shift from being Civil Service secondee to become a direct employee of 'Mainstream' TEC was indicated thus:

> Its more open here, you're working in a much flatter structure so there are more opportunities. We went down from something like 125 employees [at the TA area office] to just under 90...In civil service terms the grades are very enriched, much higher grades here but the work is much more intensive, you have more responsibility, more scope... Some of the hours are unsocial, breakfast presentations, evening meetings ...which can be quite difficult when you have a family and maybe don't have the support... I'm quite lucky..my partner is very supportive and its very much a 50/50 split....[Its] still difficult sometimes but without that [split] it would be more difficult... [because] its very much a case of you having to be 110% committed here to do the job.
> (Senior Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC)

Reinforcing this point with respect to the apparently heavy-work load which its Senior Managers carried, the Chief Executive indicated that this routinely involved in excess of sixty hours on a weekly basis. He located this feature with reference to the way in which 'Mainstream's' operational structures were organised:

> The majority of our front-line operation is sector orientated. We have what we call sector co-ordinators and sector managers. The are four sector managers on the operational side, and they each have overall responsibility for a group of sectors...Each sector manager has a team of sector co-ordinators, who are middle managers and each co-ordinator is responsible for the day-to-day management for the full range of activities within his or her sector.
> (Chief Executive, 'Mainstream' TEC)

Constituting the operational side of its senior management, the TEC's Sector Managers had lead responsibility for the whole range of activities within their allocated sectors:

> I manage two major sectors with a team of four sector co-ordinators, engineering and manufacturing, and health care and the utilities sector...within your sector you are responsible for the whole portfolio, be it training

> for adults, training for young people, help to employers (Senior Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC)

This formed one strand of what was described as an 'operationally flat but quite complex' matrix at sub-board level. The sectoral focus of its executive structures also extended to its non-executive sub-board level structures. One strand of this involved the presence of eight Employer Sector Groups. These groups played an advisory role with respect to the board, as well as being tied into its executive operations. The former was formally represented by the participation of at least one employer board director within each Employer Sector Group, whilst channels of communication between these Groups and its executive were constituted by the participation of Sector Managers within the respective sub-board Employer Sector Groups for which they had operational responsibility. Arguing that the presence of these sub-board sector groups, together with the various mechanisms through which these had been tied into different level of 'Mainstream's' organisation, were seen to play a crucial role in facilitating the TEC's market focus, the Chief Executive elaborated:

> We established the Employer Sector Groups...which are sector based and advise the board on the skill requirements and recruitment needs of their industry to ensure that the labour market drive, which is what TECs are all about.
> (Chief Executive, 'Mainstream' TEC).

A commitment was expressed to promote and support local labour market drives within its operational organisation. 'Mainstream's' geographical remit spanned a large metropolitan area characterised by cultural and ethnic diversity. It covered a working population of just under

600,000, over 80% of whom were economically active. The overall level of the area's ethnic minority population was just in excess of 197, 000.

Nineteen percent of the city's workforce were concentrated within the manufacturing and engineering sectors. These sectors had traditionally provided the city's industrial backbone. The City was dominated by large and medium size enterprises, which together with similar sized enterprises in other sectors of employment, accounted for 70% of its workforce. The remaining 30% of employees were located in the area's 85% of enterprises which employed less than 25 people.

In addition to manufacturing and engineering, the city's other main sectors of employment included retail and financial services. However in contrast to the former, which had experienced a 2.7% fall in employment levels between 1987 and 1989 when compared with national trends, the number of employees working in the latter two sectors had increased by a total of 24%. This constituted an expansion rate which was nevertheless 4% lower than national trends evidenced between 1987-1989.

Suggesting that the city had not benefited from the increased job prosperity which the UK had overall experienced during the late 1980s, this factor, together with the bite of recession at the beginning of the 1990s, contributed to the increasing levels of unemployment which were recorded in the area. Between 1990-1991, the percentage of registered unemployed had risen from 8.2% to 10%. Moreover, in addition

to increased levels of unemployment, the patterns of decline in manufacturing and engineering which it had, and was continuing to experience, were found to have had implications with regard to its skills base, with a comparative survey of job vacancies between the first half of 1988 and 1991 revealing a ….'[a shift] away from skilled manual occupations and towards largely less skilled service occupations' (Labour Market Assessment Report, 1991-1992).

This apparent tendency towards a low-skilled economy was however perceived as a short-term and temporary phenomenon, with mid to long-term forecasts suggesting economic expansion and diversification, particularly in the business and financial services sector. Moreover occupational forecasts up to the year 2000 anticipated a 2% net growth of jobs in high skill occupations located within the managerial, professional, technical and personal services sectors. As a corollary, 'Mainstream' TEC's labour market assessment argued that future jobs were: 'already showing the need for higher standards of educational achievement and also for greater skills coupled with flexibility' (ibid).

'Mainstream' TEC saw a need to promote greater opportunities for women within its training remit. The importance of promoting women trainees was based on an assessment of the apparent need for a more highly skilled workforce and was underwritten by forecasts which suggested that men's economic activity rate in the area was likely to decline by over 5% between 1991 and 1997. By way of underpinning the TEC's perception in the this respect, an in-house report conducted

in the early part of 1991 had sought to illuminate the factors which impeded women returners re-entry into the labour market after a period of absence largely prompted by child-care responsibilities (Internal Report, 1991).

Arguing that lack of child-care facilitates together with inflexible employment practices represented two of the barriers which confronted women returners, the study also identified the lack of training and up-dating opportunities as a further impediment. It was estimated that these factors combined to exclude around 25,000 of such groups of women located in and around the City who might otherwise have participated in the area's labour market. This finding was referred to in 'Mainstream's' labour market assessment, in which it also emphasised the much reported 'fact that women will make up 80% of the UK's entrants to the labour market towards the end of the decade'. Highlighting the local implications of such national and long-term forecasts, the Labour Market Assessment Report (1991-1992) thereby concluded by emphasising that 'Mainstream' TEC 'needed to increase [women's] training opportunities if women's skills potential is to be realised and the essential need to increase female activity rates is to be achieved'.

'TOKEN' TEC

Operational from the beginning of 1991, 'Token' was a medium sized TEC which had a budget of £14 million and employed 42 staff. Like 'Mainstream' TEC, it had deployed some of the flexibilities it had been granted by Government to restructure some of the training it co-ordinated for the

unemployed. However, unlike 'Mainstream', it seemed that the changes it had implemented in this respect had been motivated by reasons other than attempting to improve the quality of training provided.

'Token' TEC had reduced the length of training entitlements on ET. In tandem with this one of its Senior Managers indicated its efforts to generate efficiencies more widely had involved reducing some of the payments it made to training providers on both YT and ET. Outlining the TEC's logic for this, the Chief Executive elaborated on some of the changes it had implemented and the benefits which accrued to the TEC as a result:

> With ET we are talking about £2.5 million. ET and YT the training bit, is where all the money is. Now they are programmes that we are running on behalf of Government basically to keep the unemployed off the unemployment register...although that isn't admitted, that's basically what they're doing...Because [training is] an investment, the logic tells us the money we have, if we want to get the economy up, should be going to the employed, not the unemployed. Socially that's not acceptable and economically too...18 months ago we had skill and labour shortages, we just wanted people but that's all reversed now...We are likely to be in that situation again so we do actually need the unemployed and the marginal unwaged and we do have to run programmes but we've cut entitlements on ET and we're running all our programmes [for the unemployed] more efficiently...We are talking, between YT and ET, of about £10 million. If we can keep about 5% of that back, we've got about £0.5 million to be able to put into the employed situation...When its being done for the right reasons its quite reasonable to put some of the reserves from YT and ET elsewhere.
> (Chief Executive, 'Token' TEC).

Further recommending the TEC's logic in this respect, he emphasised the way in which putting some of its surplus resource into developing training for the employed was likely to generate a 'multiplier effect' whereby the investments which the TEC made in this regard were likely to

be more than matched by employers. This raised questions with respect to the extent to which the unemployed included within the programmes it co-ordinated would appreciate the TEC's logic in this regard, in that the surpluses it generated from YT and ET potentially operated to reduce the quality of training to which they were likely to have access to. It further seemed that the manner in which these surplus funds had been re-deployed had largely failed to generate the 'multiplier effect' which the TEC had anticipated.

As confirmation, the TEC had dedicated a significant proportion of its surplus funds to the formation of a training brokerage facility located within its Sales and Marketing Department. This represented a facility through which 'Token' would, for a fee, help local employers to develop a detailed assessment of their training needs, calculate the costs involved and then link them up with relevant training providers. However it seemed that the success of this potential income generator had been muted by the impact of recession. Elaborating on this, one of the middle managers working in 'Token's' Sales and Marketing Department began by arguing that this brokerage facility had been regarded as a :

> Very sound idea when we started out in 1991, when unemployment rates were 2.8% in this area but they are now 12.2%. All that in the space of 18 months. So the bottoms gone out of it...the sales team still go knocking on doors, and we still have a telesales team but we don't have the employer interest.
> (Middle Manager, 'Token' TEC).

In addition to its Sales and Marketing Department, the TEC comprised three other Departments, each responsible for one of the following respective areas: YT and ET, Enterprise, and

Education and Business, each of which were headed up by one of its four Senior Managers. Of these senior managers, only one was female. Moreover, whilst three quarters of its 12 middle managers were female, it was suggested by the TEC's only female Senior Manager that the managerial ethos of the TEC operated to circumscribe women's managerial powers.

Arguing that this impacted equally on its male middle managers, she elaborated:

> Its a case of middle managers in this company...that they should do as they are told. 'Don't think about these things, just go ahead and do it'. It goes for the men as well but it is exacerbated for women because there are 8 of them, they're very capable and because they are perhaps seen as a bit of a threat.
> (Senior Manager, 'Token' TEC).

This manager cited an example of how this apparent tendency to marginalise its female employees appeared to be part of its 'open' approach to their employment. In developing this point, the manager referred to one of the TEC's Senior Management meetings. Indicating that one of the topics under discussion at this meeting had related to the question of whether or not to promote one its female part-timers into a middle management position, the manager began by outlining the context against which this had been played out:

> The Chief Executive would say we actually have women who work part-time here. There are a couple that spring to mind. That fact that they are commissioned to work 25 hours a week and work 40, have to take work home, can't get any training but couldn't fit any in with the work they have to do...So we have part-women, but we rip them off, which is what normal business do but its not an exemplar...[There is] one particular woman who is a part-timer and an opportunity existed for that person, a middle management post. But it was said at the senior management meeting 'we need to watch her, I'm not sure about her commitment to the job'. So that opportunity was denied because of this assumption about part-timers

> and families, that they can't really manage the [work] commitment.
> (Senior Manager, 'Token' TEC).

This apparently negative aspect of 'Token's' management structure and process was further supported by the experiences and conclusions of one of its female middle managers. This manager suggested she had enjoyed greater managerial prerogative during her employment with the TA. She thus elaborated:

> I feel more constrained in this organisation and its not just me. There are nine of us here [including senior manager]and we happen to be friends but are also managers, we have budgets but we actually feel… Its a feeling, very subjective but we have been taken out of the decision making process.
> (Middle Manager, 'Token' TEC).

Whilst differences existed between 'Mainstream' and 'Token' TEC with regard to the executive structures they had implemented and also seemingly with respect to the managerial ethos which informed these, 'Token' TEC had, like 'Mainstream', sought to include employer representation at sub-board level. Organised on an area as opposed to sector basis, in order to reflect the three relative distinct geographic areas which were perceived to fall within its boundary, each of the three Area Employer Groups played an advisory role to the board and were respectively chaired by one of 'Token's' employer directors.

Encompassing both metropolitan and rural districts, the area covered by 'Token' was characterised by industrial diversity:

> There is no one dominating industry...If you look at [the area] as a whole you will find out that the financial services which we are very well known for is on a par with engineering, which is broadly on a par with high tech. industries which are on a par with

> services...agriculture takes a reasonable stance but it is not dominating.
> (Chief Executive, 'Token' TEC)

Contrasting to the local economy covered by 'Mainstream' TEC, this pattern of diversity had not however cushioned it against the impact of national recession. Traditionally experiencing relatively low levels of unemployment, the implications of this recession had, during the 18 months in which the TEC had been operational, been evidenced by a more than four-fold increase in the area's unemployment rate. The outcome of this trend was that the area's current rate of unemployment was just over 12% (Labour Market Assessment, 1992).

Covering an available workforce of around 290,000 people in 1990, 90% of the area's employers employed less than 25 people. This was perceived by the TEC as providing a significant area of future employment growth. The expansion of its small firms sector together with anticipated growth in the service sector, and the financial services in particular, were regarded as key areas through which economic recovery would be achieved.

Accounting for 80% of local employment growth between 1981-89, forecasts for 1990-95 suggested women would comprise 65% of labour market entrants across all local industries (ibid.) Within this, the percentage increase in women entering self-employment was anticipated to exceed that of men by more than two-fold. Thus whilst continuing to be significantly out-numbered by men, the number of women in

self-employment was forecasted to rise by 25% to 9,500 during this 5 year period, compared with forecasts suggesting that numbers of male self-employed would increase to just over 26,000; an increase of just 12% on 1990 levels (ibid.).

The importance of expanding women's training and employment opportunities was nevertheless felt to be off-set by the area's popularity as a site of company relocation (ibid.). This pattern of relocation placed pressures on its local labour market by providing an influx of outside labour which such relocation often heralded. This, in part, contributed to what was referred to as the 'employment gap', underpinned by population growth in the area which was anticipated to out-strip employment growth to the end of the decade. As a corollary, a fall in its unemployment rate to 1990 levels was not being anticipated before 2000.

'DEDMAIN' TEC

Formed at the beginning of 1991, 'Dedmain' TEC, like 'Token' TEC, was amongst the second wave of TECs to become operational. It was a medium sized TEC, with a budget £17 million and a total of 46 staff. Of these, four were Senior Managers, none of whom were female. Moreover whilst one of its senior managers suggested that women were well represented within its middle management structures, it emerged that they constituted just less than a quarter of the total 13 appointments it had made in this regard.

Like both 'Mainstream' and 'Token', 'Dedmain' TEC had implemented changes with respect to the training it co-

ordinated for the unemployed. Beginning with the ET it co-ordinated, the TEC aimed to generate efficiencies by increasingly by-passing training providers in order to contract more directly with employers. Explaining its rationale in this respect, and the way in which this had been generated by board hostility to the ET it had inherited from the TA, one of 'Dedmain's' senior managers argued:

> Our board took a serious dislike to ET during the setting up period so we more or less dismantled it from day one. What we did was set up [New ET] which turns the Government's argument on its head. [Old] ET is about training people hoping they will get a job afterwards, [New ET] is about finding a job and putting unemployed people into it. Money goes to employers and not to training providers ...by cutting out the middle-man [the TEC] can generate more profit and we can increase our payments to employers who can then go to training providers if they want to buy some training.
> (Senior Manager, 'Dedmain' TEC).

However, it appeared that not all of its board members had supported the TECs decision in this respect, a point which was emphasised by one of its non-employer directors recruited from the area's Local Authority. Indicating the way in which he had disagreed with this, he went onto suggest the recent historical context against which this issue had played out:

> Getting involved with the TEC was quite a turnaround for [the Authority] because we were at odds with the Employment Department for many years for political and economic reasons...[the old] ET was something we didn't feel we could support...I actually objected to the [new] ET because I couldn't see any safeguards for trainees, the onus seemed very much on employers ...[but] because the weight of opinion was balanced with employers [on the board], they were the driving force, it was difficult to get anyone on board, to look at things like quality and safeguards.
> (Non-Private Sector Board Member, 'Dedmain' TEC).

This effectively placed the training component of ET at the discretion of employers. One of the area's IT training

providers suggested that this had involved a noticeable reduction in the amount of training his firm was called upon to deliver. He also indicated that this had involved a gender dimension:

> We have a good reputation, quality training which is up-to-date, lots of support. [With the old ET] we actually had some women on the word-processing side getting to grips with the technical side, not because they had to but because the interest was there, particularly from older ones….You'd get some saying things like 'they've got computers at my kid's, and they're doing this. What does it mean etc.?' Now I'm not saying we could do more than a taster here, but there was some flexibility. Now what we tend to get, because its coming more from employers on [the new ET] , its 'I want her to be able to do this, how long will that take, how much will it cost'.
> (Training Provider, 'Dedmain' TEC).

Despite the changes it had implemented in this respect, 'Dedmain' was nevertheless experiencing problems in meeting Government training guarantees, particularly with respect to the YT programme it co-ordinated. One of its senior managers provided insights into the implications this had with regard to the resources of the TEC. Suggesting that this problem was more widespread than reported, he argued:

> We've been quite up-front about it and feel slightly wounded that a lot of other TECs haven't been so up-front about meeting their YT guarantees. One of our neighbouring TECs for example has stated that there isn't a problem, when we know full well that there is… The result this year has been that there are a lot of youngsters who are covered by the guarantee who aren't on YT, which isn't good for them and isn't good for [the TEC]financially.
> (Senior Manager, 'Dedmain' TEC).

Seeming to evoke a degree of frustration within the TEC, this centrally imposed focus on the unemployed was said by its Chief Executive to be symptomatic of what he perceived as a more general tension between the TEC movement and Government:

> The tension is that if targets for local programmes aren't being met, and there has been some publicity about YT guarantees recently, Government says 'TECs are

> contracted to meet these guarantees, why aren't they?'…What that means is that TECs, we have local experience of this here, have to chase their tails trying to meet those guarantees… [But] a lot of people in TECs, and the view here is that these are not our guarantees, they are Government's guarantees. And many TECs would say, 'how can you expect us to deliver your guarantee when you are cutting back our funding, and would say its not our fault there's a recession, its yours.
> (Chief Executive, 'Dedmain' TEC).

The initial operational structures of 'Dedmain' TEC had nevertheless reflected this imposed priority on the co-ordination of YT and ET within its operations. Originally comprising of four Departments, each of which was responsible for one of the following areas, YT, ET, Enterprise Development, and Education and Business, the TEC was in the process of restructuring its organisation. This involved a merger between its YT and ET Department, in order to re-deploy some of the staff from these to its business and enterprise related activities. The logic behind this seemed to centre on an attempt to change the operation of the TEC so that it could more effectively accommodate the interests of local business. The pursuit of this objective appeared to have been motivated by 'Dedmain' TEC's ultimate desire to merge with the local Chamber of Commerce.

The TEC had drawn on the Chamber's employer networks in order to constitute the Employer Groups it had inserted at sub-board level structure. Further, it seemed that a merger between the two was perceived by the TEC as providing a means by which to counter-act its local identity as a organisation concerned primarily with co-ordinating training programmes for the unemployed on behalf of Government.

Suggesting a context against which this opportunity had become apparent, the TEC's commitment to use this in an attempt to re-formulate its local identity in order to emphasise its business status, was underlined by one of its Senior Managers. At the same time, insights into how this decision had informed its operational restructuring were suggested:

> The Chamber is declining around here, both financially and membership wise. We could bring them the kind of expertise that frankly they haven't got and they could bring us the permanency and kind of reputation that we haven't got, and a recognition in the market place that we haven't got. We'll soon be in the same building and there are discussions about a merger. For this to happen, there will have to be some changes on both sides... On our side, we need to get more of an employer focus, change how we operate so we're seen as a business, that we're seen to be in touch with employers. (Senior Manager, 'Dedmain' TEC).

Committed to confirming its business status by more fully accommodating the needs and interests of employers within its organisational structures, 'Dedmain' TEC covered a geographic area which contained an economically active population of around 260,000. In tandem with this, the area contained a significant ethnic minority population of around 50,000 people.

Just over 100,000 of the area's economically active population were female. This proportion was slightly lower than the UK average, a feature which was in part explained by industrial make-up of its local economy, which leant heavily towards engineering and manufacturing. Accounting for 31% of its workforce, 17% of employment within these sectors was provided by large engineering firms. In tandem with this,

the textile industry represented the second largest employer in the area, employing 7% of its workforce (Labour Market Assessment, 1992).

Informed by the impact of recession and the effects of international competition, these sectors were experiencing a down-turn, which, in tandem with the implications of technological change, had contributed to increasing rates of unemployment within the area. Rising from 6.5% in 1991 to just under 10% in 1992, forecasts suggested that such high unemployment rates were likely to continue into the latter part of the 1990s, despite forecasts which predicated a 6% growth of employment in higher skilled areas like management, technical and professional and associated occupations between 1991 and 2001 (ibid.). Moreover, although demographic factors suggested that the area was less vulnerable to the implications of demographic down-turn, with a 9% fall in the numbers of 16-24 years up to 2001 being partly off-set by a 4% increase in the number of 25-34 years old potentially available to employers, such skill forecasts were, in concert with the relatively low levels of female participation levels which the area exhibited, seen to underline the need promote the training of women-returners (ibid).

CONCLUSION

On the basis on this brief overview, it would seem that points of both convergence and divergence exist between the three TECs studied. With regard to the latter, differences of size and funding levels have been identified, particularly

with regard to the implications of this for the scale of operational surplus which each TEC was able of accrue.

Likewise, the differences they exhibited with regard to the changes implemented within the training they co-ordinated for the unemployment have been identified. This had the implication that the training content of the ET which 'Dedmain' and 'Token' TEC co-ordinated might be in danger of diminishing; diminution which it could be argued the scheme could ill-afford given the reputation for offering poor quality training which has tended to dog it since its national inception. Reflecting a somewhat short-term view, the changes they had made in this respect can, to some extent, be contrasted with the longer-term rationale which informed the changes which 'Mainstream' had inserted within the ET it co-ordinated. For in this TEC there appeared to be some effort to improve the quality of the training co-ordinated within ET, in marked contrast with the other two.

Points of difference have also been identified within the executive organisation of each TEC, together with selective insights into the position of their female employees. With regard to the latter, and noting the caveat referred to above, it would seem that 'Mainstream' TEC exhibited the most open employment structure with respect to women.

In addition to points of difference, important areas of convergence have been indicated. All three sought to support and reflect the local labour market drives. This point was evident within the representation of employers' interests and

the way in which each TEC had taken steps to have these interests represented within the sub-board level structures of their respective organisations.

In tandem with this, all three TECs were confronted with the local implications of national recession and the rising levels of unemployment which this heralded. These operated to potentially reduce the training imperative by masking longer-term skill shortages within the labour market, and thereby diminished the immediacy of the economic case for expanding women's training opportunities. Nevertheless, all three TECs, to greater and lesser extents, seemed to underline the need for such opportunities in the longer term. Taking this as its basis, the following Chapter explores the way in which this longer term awareness had been translated into action. In order to do this, the Chapter explores the steps which each TEC had taken to expand women's training opportunities.

REPRODUCING AND RESISTING WOMEN'S INEQUALITY: TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES CO-ORDINATED

INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to provide insights into the various opportunities which the training programmes and initiatives which the three TECs co-ordinated offered to women. The discussion begins with an examination of the YT and ET which each co-ordinated; programmes within which women are under-represented and which are also characterised by a pervasive process of gender stereo-typing. Within this discussion, an attempt will be made to convey the extent to which each of the three TECs defined such patterns of under-representation and gender stereo-typing as problematic, the steps they were taking to challenge this, and the factors which appeared to impede this.

The second section of the chapter outlines the training initiatives which the three TECs specifically targeted towards women. This aims, in part, to provide insights into the scale and range of the provision which each targeted towards women, in order to foreground the differences which existed between them in this regard. In tandem with this, a

small sample of these initiatives will also be discussed in relative detail in an effort to contribute towards a fuller assessment. This assessment will include the perspectives of some of the women participating within them.

YOUTH TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

The way in which YT and ET operate to reflect and reproduce pervasive patterns of sexual segregation apparent within the labour market is widely acknowledged, the details of which have been reported above. They exhibit a tendency to channel women trainees into traditionally female areas of employment like clerical and service occupations. These areas are characterised by relatively low levels of pay. In view of this, it would seem that unless mechanisms geared towards challenging such patterns of gender stereo-typing are inserted within YT and ET programmes, the potential for these programmes to play a part in prefiguring employment trajectories for their female participants which are characterised by greater levels of sexual equality is likely to remain questionable.

All three TECs suggested an awareness of the tendency for YT and ET to channel women into traditional employment areas. Likewise, all three acknowledged the tendency for women to be particularly under-represented within the ET they co-ordinated. However, the extent to which these perceptions operated to precipitate strategic efforts to challenge such patterns was found to vary significantly.

The Head of 'Dedmain' TEC's YT and ET Department noted the way in which its monitoring procedures had indicated that women on ET were 'not represented in anywhere near the number that they ought to be'. He further identified tendency for both its YT and ET female trainees to be concentrated in occupational areas which were traditionally dominated by women. Whilst noting this, he nevertheless suggested that the TEC largely eschewed targeting strategies:

> We've got very little training that is specifically aimed at women. What we try to do is to get women into the training that is there.
> (Senior Manager, 'Dedmain' TEC).

However, when asked to indicate how such efforts were manifested with regard to promoting women's access to non-traditional areas of employment, it was suggested that this was not perceived as a priority for the TEC. Indicating the TECs apparent logic in this respect, this manager went onto cite employment trends within its local economy:

> It's something we would like to do but its not a priority... If you look at how the local economy is going to expand its irrational to exclude half the population but the trouble is that since the non-traditional areas, as far as women are concerned, are in decline you have to be careful about what indeed you are doing. If its about women into management, yes. Or women into high tech. sunrise industries, yes. But traditionally, its been women into engineering or construction, which are in rapid decline at the moment. So you wouldn't really want to encourage women to enter these areas. If its high tech., yes but then there is the problem with funding. It's expensive to train people in that area.
> (Senior Manager, 'Dedmain' TEC).

Whilst acknowledging the impact recession had had in restricting training opportunities in areas like engineering, such opportunities were still nevertheless available. However, it seemed that access to these opportunities remained a largely male prerogative, with the TECs own figures suggesting that only just under 3% of female YT

trainees were involved in the engineering training it co-ordinated. It further seemed that the TECs commitment to emphasise the role of workplace based training, by increasing efforts to contract directly with employers, was unlikely to involve any attempt to encourage more women into non-traditional areas:

> We could try to influence companies, which we don't. At the end of the day they take who they want..My view has always been that training needs to reflect the workplace so we've decided not to adopt the 1980-s approach to YT which is to create false learning environments like training workshops which don't actually relate to the world of work at all..The good thing about this is that if a woman opts for engineering, she works in a male dominated environment from day one. At least she knows what she has let herself in for.
> (Senior Manager, 'Dedmain' TEC).

This apparent privileging of workplace training environments, in tandem with an unwillingness on 'Dedmain's' part to encourage employers to transform traditionally male dominated training and employment areas into more 'women-friendly' environments, thereby constituted a far from pro-active approach to 'challenging' patterns of sexual segregation within the training the TEC co-ordinated for the unemployed. Furthermore, as noted above, it appeared that recourse to arguments around the area's industrial decline, and the implications this had with regard to reducing employment opportunities in traditionally male areas of employment like engineering, was seen to legitimate the gendered processes of occupational closure which continued to limit women's access to some non-traditional forms of training which it co-ordinated.

However recourse to arguments around industrial change and decline could not be so easily marshalled to legitimate the tendency for women to be excluded from the higher technology training 'Dedmain' co-ordinated. Although the costs of this form of provision meant that it only offered a small amount of such training, it was nevertheless suggested that men, and particularly young men, tended to predominate in such programmes. Providing insights into why this was the case, a junior staff member in the TEC's YT and ET Department, whose responsibilities related to arranging trainees placements in this area of the TEC's operational remit, elaborated:

> I wouldn't want to say its always a case of 'we want a young lad, someone who's already got a knack', you know, 'something we can build on'. But there's that kind of under-current, like you can't teach old dogs new tricks. It's not something that's said directly, but you get the message somehow... [Women] it's a bit different, you still get that [attitude] with returners to some extent, the older ones, but you also get informally, off the record so to speak, 'we don't want anyone who's going to get pregnant or push off when the summer holidays come'. So it's more about commitment really, that young lads are more committed, that they want to get on.
> (Junior staff member, 'Dedmain' TEC).

This staff member thereby suggested that such perceptions operated to impede women's access to the small amount of higher technology training it did fund, insofar as the apparent gendering of the 'commitment' commodity informally seemed to construct women as a greater training risk in such high investment skill areas. The disproportionate representation of women within the lower level IT training which 'Dedmain' TEC co-ordinated can be seen to reflect the other side of this equation, insofar as such relatively cheap IT add-ons were perceived to enhance the marketability of what were, in the case of women-returners, perceived to be an

already popular labour market 'product':

> Certain groups are much easier to help than others, like women-returners are genuinely easy to locate. They are quite a desirable product, with a bit of training …word-processing, that kind of thing.
> (Senior Manager, 'Dedmain' TEC).

The implication of this was that the Out-Put Related (ORF) funding which Government had imposed on TECs with respect to their training of women-returners on ET, which required the achievement of both a job and an NVQ, was not perceived by 'Dedmain' to represent a potential disincentive to training such groups of women within traditional areas of employment.

The potential for such criteria to act as a disincentive with regard to promoting women returners' access to non-traditional areas was however made evident by one of 'Mainstream's' Senior Managers. She suggested a tension between ORF and the efforts which the TEC was taking to increase women's representation in such areas. This manager thus argued:

> The double whammy we call it. We find one of the major problems is that you need the double out-put, which in this climate is very hard to achieve. It's hard to achieve with people that have no recent relevant work experience, who are at a disadvantage within the labour market…. [If it's] office work, it's not such a problem because the experience may be there, it might need brushing up but that's not such a problem. But if she wants to try something different, an area where you don't find many women, it gets more difficult…What it means is that providers are less likely to take these women on, are less likely to want to run [non-traditional] courses that we might want to fund [through ET] for women-returners because it means the risk of having to put all this ORF on individuals who might find it difficult to meet the target.
> (Senior Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

Reinforcing such apparent concerns, the Senior Manager responsible for 'Token' TEC's YT and ET Department argued

that there was a potential for ORF to reinforce existing patterns of gender-stereotyping within YT and ET as a whole. Foregrounding the tension which ORF was perceived to generate between trainee choice and local labour market imperatives, she suggested that the resolution of this involved a narrowing of training options which were available to both male and female trainees. However, in mapping onto existing patterns of sexual segregation within the area's local employment and training markets, it seemed that such narrowing was likely to reinforce rather than resist such processes of gender-stereotyping:

> One of the key things packed away in ORF …it's about the need to redefine the guarantee, choosing training courses which are relevant to current labour market needs. And therefore you don't encourage women to go into engineering because there aren't jobs for them in engineering. There are jobs for them in shops. So I'm not squashing young girls into shops because we do have non-traditional provision despite the difficulties. That's all good stuff but to actually raise expectations too much would be unfair because the emphasis isn't on individual needs, getting them to look very broadly, it's about balancing individual's vocational direction against the skills needs of the area.
> (Senior Manager, 'Token' TEC).

Asked to indicate why raising expectations with regard to encouraging women to enter non-traditional forms of training was perceived as unfair, she elaborated:

> Partly recession because what we are trying to do is to encourage men, who want to go into construction, which is totally inappropriate [because] the slump in construction industry means it won't pick up for at least 2 or 3 years. So we are having to say to these people, most of them male, 'I know you want to be electricians or bricklayers, but you'll have to look at alternatives'. So there's that but also mainly unfair because, in engineering for example, most employers expect or want to recruit young men. So it would be unfair to raise young women's expectations by providing them with training when there would be no jobs at the end of it. And also it would be unfair on us, from a financial point of view, because if it's YT we've wasted our money. [If it's] ET we wouldn't get the ORF.
> (Senior Manager, 'Token' TEC).

Geared towards making training provision more responsive to local labour market needs, a key problem with ORF therefore seemed to hinge on the way it appeared to overlook, and thereby potentially operated to reinforce, the way in which the labour market was already structured along gender lines. Thus while longer-term skill projections, in tandem with demographic forecasts, may have possibly provided some basis upon which to challenge the continuity of such gender-based labour market inflexibilities, such potential was likely to be threatened by the short-termism which ORF seemed to foster. In this respect, the operation of the labour market incentive to concentrate on meeting local skills needs which were immediately apparent, as opposed to encouraging longer-term strategies, combined with the tendency for employers' to express their short-term skills needs along gendered lines, potentially represented a means by which gender stereo-typing would be reinforced rather than challenged.

Despite the potential disincentive that ORF represented with regard to encouraging women on YT and ET to look beyond training in traditionally female occupations, both 'Token' and 'Mainstream' TEC had, in contrast to 'Dedmain' TEC, implemented strategies geared towards widening the training options which its unemployed female trainees might consider. A sampling initiative, extended to male and female trainees on YT, 'Taster Training' had been introduced by 'Token' TEC in order to give trainees the opportunity to experience training in four different occupations prior to committing themselves to a particular employment area. This initiative

was primarily introduced as a means of enabling trainees to make a more informed choice before opting to follow a particular training course. As a result, trainees were not required to sample training in non-traditional areas. However one of the TEC's middle managers responsible for co-ordinating the initiative suggested that they were encouraged to do this and went onto indicate that feed-back from the training providers involved suggested that significant numbers of both the male and female trainees who participated in it did take tasters in at least one non-traditional area.

'Taster Training' was first introduced at the beginning 1992, and had only been operating for just under 6 months. It was further suggested that it was still in the process of being refined and had not yet been subject to systematic evaluation. As a corollary, information relating to the outcomes it produced with regard to the numbers of its female and male trainees who ultimately went onto pursue training in non-traditional areas was not available. However, qualitative insights obtained from the evaluation sheets which a sample of the initiative's trainees had completed were said the have yielded a largely positive response:

> The [evaluation] sheet was quite wide ranging, asking them what they liked or didn't like about different options, but there's also a bit at the end where they're asked about what they think they've gained from it, ...So you'd get things like 'I'd never have tried this because I thought it was a girl's thing or a boy's thing but it was really interesting' . There's that kind of thing but also, if it's female usually, ' I always wanted to be a nursery nurse' or male,'a mechanic, but I wanted to be sure and now I am'.
> (Middle Manager, 'Token' TEC).

Seeming to challenge the preconceptions of some of its participants, and thereby possibly encourage them to enter training in non-traditional areas, the likelihood of 'Taster Training' having any significant impact on the gender-stereotyping which characterised the YT which 'Token' co-ordinated was felt to be limited by the relatively small percentage of trainees who had access to it. Thus at the time of the study, it was open to only about 10% of the area's YT trainees. Moreover, whilst the ultimate intention had been to expand it in order to cover around 60% of its YT trainees, and also to introduce it into the ET it co-ordinated, this plan was said to have postponed for financial reasons.

As a corollary, it seemed that the potential for 'Token' TEC to challenge the gender stereo-typing which characterised its training for the unemployed was likely to be very limited. Moreover, with respect to its ET training, the stance which it had taken with regard to the payment of a child-care allowance to ET trainees promised to restrict the already limited access which groups like women returners had to it. Exercising the discretionary powers it had been given by Government in order to limit the payment of a child-care allowance to those falling within the ET guarantee group, the Head of 'Token's' YT and ET Dept. indicated the factors which had informed its decision in this respect, and the implications it suggested:

> The problem with this is that to generate surplus, it's not in the interest of the TEC to take on women who need child-care. It's a case of the Government saying 'there exists within the programme monies to pay [for] equipment, child-care etc' and they may be right when you look at the total Government budget for all TECs but I get a unit price for ET which is £58 a week [per

> trainee week], and if child-care is £50 per week, where is the money coming from? To take a practical example, if it's costing me £40 a week training, £50 a week child-care and I get £58 a week, I'm actually bankrupting the company, not only am I not generating profit I'm actually eating into profits we haven't made yet…[So] women who aren't in the ET guarantee, mainly women returners, because it is fairly narrowly defined, aren't getting the best of [the TEC] because of the cost, because we don't pay [child-care] allowances, so if they want to get on ET they have to pay for their own child-care.
> (Senior Manager, 'Token' TEC)

In contrast 'Mainstream' TEC has established 'Path Finder', a sampling strategy predicated on promoting adults' access to education and training more widely. Open to both women and men, one of the TEC's senior managers suggested that women tended to constitute the majority of its participants. In addition to offering vocational tasting, it also provided participants with advice and guidance in making career choices, in tandem with basic language training if required.

The length of the course ranged from 4 to 12 weeks and involving both part-time and full-time provision. Primarily designed as a lead into the various ET programmes it co-ordinated, this provision also aimed to encourage participants to consider self-employment options available under the Enterprise Scheme which the TEC co-ordinated for Government, in addition to exploring the various Access to Higher Education courses offered by local Further Education colleges. The programme was open to women excluded by the guarantee and aim criteria which Government had imposed with regard to ET. In addition to this provision, 'Mainstream' TEC had attempted to bridge the apparent gap in terms of the progression routes available to such participants interested in pursuing ET by using some of its funding flexibilities.

Although acknowledged as 'less than ideal' by one of the TEC's managers, the use of these flexibilities was said to have enabled 'Mainstream' to offer groups like women returners free access to training, but without the £10 training allowance paid to those included within its ET aim and guarantee groups:

> For those that aren't benefit eligible which is mainly women returners who aren't locked into the benefit system the package we offer is free training, a qualification, some help with travel and a child-care entitlement but there isn't the extra £10 [allowance]. (Senior Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

The initiative had been introduced in 1991 and had been operating for just under a year. In the monitoring of 'Path-Finder' participants it had been revealed that there was a need to develop women-only forms of provision, both in order to encourage more women into non-traditional areas, and to promote the participation of the area's female Asian population within this initiative. 'Mainstream' indicated that it was currently in the process of developing such women-only training initiatives with a view to inserting these within the training it planned to implement during the following year. In addition, it was suggested that it planned to pilot the sampling segment of 'Path-Finder' within its YT during the same period. It was envisaged that this pilot would involve extending taster options to both its male and female YT trainees. Whilst details of this had yet to be finalised, it seemed that such taster options would involve a stand alone module, designed to provide a bridge into the different vocational schemes it co-ordinated under YT.

This initiative was one strand of the TEC's strategy to challenge gender stereotyping within the YT it co-ordinated. 'Mainstream' was also in the process of devising a system of training targets for the training providers it contracted with, which it planned to implement during the same period in which it's taster initiative was due to be launched. Indicating the rationale for this, one of its Senior Managers also provided insights into how this strategy was to be implemented:

> It's when you come to look down on individual occupations, like hairdressing, in gender terms it's 92% female, care - 89% female, construction, 96% male, engineering the same. So that's the baseline [on YT]. What we are going to do now is set targets with our providers which will be written into the contract, improvement targets...Each year we are going to set one target which will be incrementally improved. So what we've decided for the first year, where in traditional areas, in terms of gender, participation is below 10%, like construction, engineering, motor vehicle, that we'll be looking for a 5% improvement.
> (Senior Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES CO-ORDINATED FOR WOMEN OUTSIDE OF YT AND ET

'Mainstream' manifested the strongest commitment of the three TECs studied to challenge patterns of sexual segregation with the training it co-ordinated. This TEC also seemed to have made efforts to extend women's access to the ET by providing child-care allowance to trainees excluded from its ET guarantee. As will be seen below, this relatively strong commitment to increase women's training opportunities was also evidenced within the training initiatives it specifically targeted towards women, in that it co-ordinated a wider range of initiatives in this respect than either of the other two TECs.

Taken as a whole, the initiatives which the three TECs targeted towards women outside their YT and ET provision were wide-ranging if relatively small in scale. Funded largely from their respective Local Initiative Funds (LIFs), 'Mainstream' TEC had also deployed some of its operational surpluses in this regard, in addition to funds generated by successful bids to the ESF.

'Dedmain' TEC

In line with its apparent general commitment not to run training initiatives specifically targeted towards women, 'Dedmain' TEC indicated the presence of only two such initiatives, one of which was very small scale. This latter initiative was a collaborative project, jointly funded by the TEC's LIF and the Engineering Council. Financial support was provided for the participation of six young female local sixth formers on a three day course sited in the area's Polytechnic. Aimed at encouraging more young women to enter science and engineering occupations, this initiative had been run towards the end of 1991.

In addition to this, the second initiative which it co-ordinated involved a larger scale project which aimed to target women who lived in some of the relatively isolated and economically deprived housing estates on the outskirts of the city. Run in conjunction with a local community college, the initiative had been jointly funded by the TEC and the local City Council. It ran over a period of three months, and involved a weekly half day commitment by participants. This

was arranged to fit in with school hours. The initiative also included free child-care facilities for women with pre-school age children. Coming to the end of its second period of presentation in June 1992, it was suggested that this, like its first presentation at the beginning of the year, had been significantly over-subscribed:

> We wanted to keep it small on purpose so a lot of interaction could take place, to develop a support network. We wanted 12 but we actually got 18 and a waiting list.
> (Course Tutor).

Discussions with one of the women tutors on the course, together with some of its participants, provided greater insights into the background of the women who took part, and also revealed the apparent value the initiative was perceived to represent.

The majority of women who participated on the course had left school with few or no qualifications. One of its tutors indicated a central strand of the course involved trying to raise the confidence levels of its participants:

> A lot of them left school with nothing and thought they were lucky to get any kind of job. Quite a few haven't had any employment experience outside [unemployment] schemes...so you're dealing with very low self-esteem which can be quite difficult to get over...What we're about is to try to get over this, to get women to think about what they can do, what they could do in the future...It's really about confidence-building, raising expectations and then giving advice on how to go about it,...Some of it's very practical, what their options are, help with child-care support...but you have to build up confidence first and get support networks going because isolation and lack of confidence are quite a big problem.
> (Course Tutor).

Underlining these points, women participating in the course indicated the value it was perceived to have both with respect to raising confidence levels, and with regard to

other factors. One woman, for example, indicated:

> I look forward to this all week, to get out of the house because it's the same routine. Get up, get [my son] breakfast, get him ready [for school], do the cleaning, shopping, do dinner and the same things over again... You need a break, something to get you out of the house...I've got friends here and [the tutors] are great, really want us to get on.
> (Female Trainee #1).

While another argued:

> I've got more confidence, never had none before. I didn't have confidence for nothing, getting a job or nothing ...I fancy doing something in an office, secretarial or something.
> (Female Trainee #2).

Indicating the way in which the initiative also offered a means by which its participants could briefly escape the isolation and monotony which seemed to characterise their experiences of housework and parenting, these sentiments were expressed by the majority of the 9 women who agreed to take part in the group discussion. Appearing to have had a positive impact on the confidence levels of its participants, just over half indicated their intention to pursue further training or educational opportunities in the short-term, with the remainder suggesting such intentions in the longer-term. Whilst the majority of these were considering ET, one of the women indicated her ultimate goal involved social work, an area in which she had had some relevant past work experience during her employment as a care assistant in a day care centre for the disabled prior to becoming pregnant. As a corollary, she indicated her intention to enrol on the Access to Higher Education course offered by the community college responsible for staffing this initiative.

None of the women considering ET expressed their intention to follow options in non-traditional areas but instead seemed to be thinking mainly in terms of training in caring and clerical occupations. Explained in terms of the way in which its tutor suggested its participants lacked experience of such areas, and the tendency for them to define such areas as inappropriate for women, discussions with the women themselves tended to confirmed this view. However it also seemed that such gendered choices were also informed by a positive assessment and evaluation of what such traditional forms of employment were perceived to entail. These assessments seemed to underline the apparent importance of 'caring' occupations, and also suggested the way in which attempting to pursue employment within traditional areas like clerical work was seen as a step upwards with respect to employment status. Thus one of the women who was thinking about moving onto an ET programme relating to elderly care not only suggested instrumental motives around the likely availability of employment in this area, but also emphasised what she regarded as the intrinsic value of such employment:

> You'd feel like you was helping, because they're old and don't have nobody… [and] because there's jobs in homes and stuff.
> (Female Trainee #3)

Whilst the woman quoted on the previous page, who had expressed her interest in clerical/secretarial work, indicated that she felt training in this was likely to provide greater levels of job satisfaction and better pay. Beginning by describing her negative experience of shop work

via her earlier participation on YTS, she elaborated:

> [Shop work] you're a dogs-body, lousy money, on your feet all day... Never wanted [to work in a shop] but that was all there was... [With] secretarial you'd get prospects, better money.
> (Female Trainee #2).

The tutor referred to above suggested that the lack of support for child-care, in tandem with other costs, was seen to represent a key factor in restricting the progression routes which might otherwise have been available to some of the women on the initiative. Nevertheless, she also emphasised the way in which 'Dedmain's' current position on the payment of child-care allowance to trainees inside and outside its ET guarantee group represented a valuable mechanism by which to facilitate the movement of some of the initiative's participants on to ET.

However the extent to which even such limited progression routes were likely to be available to such groups of women returners in the future seemed to be questioned by 'Dedmain's' plan to change what it characterised as its current 'open door' policy with respect to the payment of child-care allowance on ET. Contrasting its current position on this, with its future plans, the Head of its YT and ET therefore suggested:

> We have an open door policy at the moment which is actually quite expensive because if you've got women on ET, in the guarantee or not, then money for child-care is there...What we're thinking of doing, what I think we will do, is to say if trainees fall into the guarantee, then that money will still be there, and there is talk of increasing that from £50 to £60 pounds a week but to do that and to make sure we can meet our training

> guarantees overall, we'll have to tighten up eligibility on the [child-care] allowances side.
> (Senior Manager, 'Dedmain' TEC).

If 'Dedmain' TEC adopted the same position as that exhibited by 'Token' TEC with respect to limiting the payment of child-care allowances to those included within its guarantee groups, the outcome would be that the participation of women-returners with child-care commitments would be contingent upon their ability to self-finance child-care support. This is a development which would be likely to have particularly negative implications with respect the participation of economically disadvantaged women on ET.

'Token' TEC

'Token' TEC co-ordinated three forms of provision specifically targeted towards women. These initiatives tended to be organised around the themes of management and enterprise training.

The first initiative involved an attempt to encourage women to consider self-employment. This proposal arose from a study the TEC had done which revealed the apparent advantages which self-employment was perceived to offer women returners in particular (Internal Document, 1992). One of key benefits self-employment was seen to offer such women related to the facility it provided to work from home, thereby making it easier for women to combine child-care commitments with employment (ibid.). The initiative involved extending the enterprise training provided under the national Enterprise Allowance Scheme which 'Token' administered for Government to

women returners who fell outside the unemployed guarantee groups which the Government had stipulated.

Housed in the local Enterprise Centre, the initiative was facilitated by a member of the Centre's staff specifically concerned with promoting women into self-employment and enterprise. Funded from 'Token' LIF, and targeted specifically to women-returners not eligible for training support through the Enterprise Allowance Scheme, 'Enterprising Women' involved a flexible form of delivery. This involved two training days per week, designed to fit with school hours, over a 6 week period. The programme was designed to cover issues on how participants might balance running a business from home and managing this alongside existing family commitments. Basic training in various business related skills were also covered such as assessing potential markets, drawing up business plans and obtaining start-up finance. After completing the course, and producing a credible business plan, in addition to being able to generate a minimum £1,000 start-up budget, participants were then eligible for a weekly grant of £50 per week over a 6 month period.

The initiative involved women-only provision. The merits of this were described by 'Enterprising Women's' facilitator in terms of the more supportive environment it created for the 10 women who had taken part in it. Emphasis was also given to the way in which this enabled issues which might not

otherwise be addressed to be explored:

> Women will not address issues [in mixed groups] that they would talk about in women's groups. Perhaps because they feel if they ask something in a mixed sex group, the men will think 'what a wally that woman is'... Issues that woman want to address, if they have children, they may not be major problems but there are challenges, if they're married they may not have their husband's support in starting a business...Some people say 'Oh we're not there to help the social problems, or family problems', but they are issues that women address. (Course Facilitator).

The course included efforts to raise its participants awareness of the existence of a local network group of women who ran their own business within the area. This process included arrangements for a couple of women involved in the network to give talks to women on the initiative, together with providing them with a listing of contact names within the network, and the various events it planned to run. This had been done in order to compensate for the tendency for women to be marginalised within the area's existing business networks. It also seemed that this attempt to tie the initiative's participants into such female networks was seen as potentially offering them an important source of future support if they decided to start their own business. Outlining the rationale for this, its facilitator suggested:

> With men's networks, just take for example even a mixed network like the Chamber of Commerce, if they have a launch or something, there maybe a 100 men and maybe, if you're lucky a dozen women and that's exceptional. Nothing against the Chamber because it could be any business organisation... Some women [on the course] wouldn't have had the confidence to say anything in that kind of setting...couldn't do it so it was really about support and confidence, saying 'if you start-up [a business] there are all these other women in the network and there are these events so every so often you could come along and talk to like minded business women'... Men can [network] in pubs, there are more places where men

> can go to network and talk to business people than there are for women to [network].
> (Course Facilitator).

The initiative was perceived by the facilitator as providing the basis for self-employment in a wide range of areas. One feature of the programmes was that participants tended to explore employment areas in which they already had relevant past employment experience. It was thereby suggested by the facilitator that one of the initiative's participants had been interested in starting a mobile hairdressing business. Two other participants, each with relevant degrees and previous work experience, were said to have considered business start-ups with regard to garden design and planning, and computer consultancy.

Information on how many of its 10 participants had moved onto self-employment was not available, due to the time span of the research. However, the initiative's facilitator suggested that over half of its participants were likely to move into self-employment. However, whilst issues around confidence building were seen, like the second initiative co-ordinated by 'Dedmain' TEC, as an integral part of 'Token's' 'Enterprising Women' initiative, discussions with its facilitator suggested that the class background of its participants differed from those covered by the former initiative. This factor was presumably in part informed by participants' awareness that they would need to generate £1,000 start-up capital prior to becoming eligible for the follow-on allowance which was potentially available. Thus when asked to provide a description of the types of women

that had taken part in the initiative, well over half were said to have had established careers prior to leaving the labour market, which included working in a relatively prestigious hair salon, nursing, employment in the computer industry, and teaching.

'Future Manager', the second initiative which 'Token' funded from its LIF, tended to reflect a similar class bias. However in contrast to 'Enterprising Women', which was said to have mainly been perceived by its participants as providing a means by which to pursue past work experiences and interests through self-employment, the opportunities which 'Future Manager' represented turned on its up-dating dimension. In addition, it also offered participants the potential to shift vocational direction after a period outside the labour market.

The mode of delivery was part-time, comprising of two training days and one day company placement per week, and it ran over a period of 16 weeks. On completion of the course, trainees were required to produce a training portfolio and project, based around their company placements. The successful submission of these portfolios resulted in the award of a nationally recognised management qualification.

Providing an insight into the backgrounds of the women who took part in the initiative, the course co-ordinator suggested:

> It's mainly women who have some sort of achievement. So you're talking about women who had a degree and maybe a management level job before they left or maybe they've

> got the achievement but they want to re-focus, change direction.
> (Course Co-ordinator).

Interviews with two of the eight participants on the course tended to reinforce this assessment, suggesting their backgrounds to be middle-class[1]. Thus the first, who had worked as a full-time nurse prior to leaving work to have children, was married to a G.P and was in the final year of studying for an Open University degree. The second had taught Maths at a Secondary School prior to having a child. Reluctant to return to their previous occupations, one of the key attractions of the course seemed to lie in the potential the course was perceived to give them to change occupational direction and to widen their occupational choice:

> A lot of people say that teaching is the ideal thing for a mother to do and in fact I don't feel that being up to here with other people's children is a good preparation for going back and being with your own…., I'd thought about [management] before I saw this course because I liked the management side of teaching. I was head of 6th form before I left, so there was quite a lot of management involved but I wanted to find out more before making a commitment.
> (Trainee #2).

> Nursing's very hard work, emotionally and physically…so I really didn't want to go back to that. That's why I'm doing the degree, that and so I'd be able to talk about more than what they're doing in play-group!…I'd done management and decision-making on the degree, but with this [course] you actually get hands on experience, you get to work at [a company] and it fits in with everything else.
> (Trainee #1).

The third initiative 'Token' co-ordinated involved targeting women located in some rural areas. This initiative was aimed at combating the way in which the relative isolation which

was perceived to characterise women's position within such rural areas was seen to impede their potential to become economically active. The TEC's 'Rural Women' initiative represented a broad-based project which involved the employment of 1 part-time development worker. This development worker suggested that the outcomes it produced were variable. In noting this, she provided insights into how the initiative aimed to involve local women, and the trickle-down effect the initiative aimed to elicit, by citing the examples of the kinds of developments it facilitated:

> [Local] women are actually involved in doing some of the research and development, working in groups and feeding-back. For example, it could be that the village needs child-care and maybe a woman is interested in starting a creche or nursery, so I can give advice on how she might do a business start-up in that and the kinds of support that are available. Other women might want to use this creche so they can travel out of the village to work, others might be interested in home-working, tele-working, others might decide they want more learning, so I can give advice on the distance-learning packages which are available….So you've got a lot of different things, a lot of different needs, varying outcomes.
> (Development Worker)

This initiative was a relatively broad ranging project which covered women from a variety of different backgrounds. Assessing the extent to which both middle-class and working class women were represented within this was therefore more difficult to ascertain than in the case of the other two initiatives 'Token' TEC co-ordinated. However, the initiative's development worker suggested it did offer particular advantages to working-class women. The basis of this claim was that the outreach facility it offered had particular advantages to women reliant on the irregular forms

[1] .These two respondents reported that the other participants on the course were located in similar class positions.

of public transport which tended to characterise the rural areas covered by the initiative.

With the possible exception of the latter, the initiatives which 'Token' TEC specifically targeted towards women appeared to evidence a middle-class bias. While these initiatives offered valuable and important opportunities to such groups of women, this class bias can nevertheless be seen as problematic. The reason for this turns on the way in which the provision which 'Token' TEC had made in this regard tended to preclude an attempt to address the inter-play of class and gender inequalities which operate to circumscribe the training and employment opportunities of working-class women. By tending to overlook this within the initiatives it co-ordinated, its potential to challenge such over-lapping loci of disadvantage would thereby seem to be limited.

'Mainstream' TEC

'Mainstream' demonstrated the greatest commitment of the three TECs to promote initiatives specifically aimed at encouraging women to enter non-traditional occupations. The TEC currently co-ordinated two such courses in the areas of technology and building services, and had previously co-ordinated a management training course for women, which, at the time of the study, was out for tender with a view to up-dating it for presentation during the following year. It was also in the process of developing a European Social Fund bid with a view to being able to offer a more specific management course in building services.

In addition to the relative commitment it expressed with regard to promoting non-traditional forms of training for women, 'Mainstream' TEC was the only one of the three to have initiatives specifically aimed at women from ethnic minority groups. For instance, the TEC was currently funding a pilot project at a nearby University which aimed to accredit non-UK qualifications in the areas of business administration and social work. One of the TEC's senior managers suggested this project would ultimately be extended to non-ethnic minority women with relevant paid or unpaid experience, as a mechanism by which to credit prior learning and experience. In addition, an initiative specifically targeted towards female Asian home-workers was in the planning stage, which would aim to increase the qualification and English language skills of women within this category.

Finally, whilst demonstrating a relatively strong commitment to expand women's training opportunities, and to include initiatives targeted towards women from ethnic minorities within this, 'Mainstream' had also dedicated some of its funds towards raising an awareness of equal opportunity issues amongst local employers. This was something which neither of the other two TECs had engaged in or even acknowledged as important.

To provide an account of this wide ranging provision, a detailed profile of the non-traditional forms of training which 'Mainstream' co-ordinated for women will be presented. This will be complemented by a brief examination of an

initiative which, whilst not directly targeted at women, had nevertheless had a high take-up rate by women. Finally the nature of the equal opportunities work that the TEC was in the process of developing with employers will be briefly discussed.

'Mainstream' co-ordinated two courses dedicated towards encouraging women to train in non-traditional areas. These were jointly funded by the TEC and the successful bids it had made to the European Social Fund. The first involved an 'Access for Women into Building Services' course, whilst the second involved 'Access for Women into Technology'. These courses were offered from two of the area's Further Education colleges, both of which was located in inner-city areas characterised by a large Asian and Afro-Caribbean population. Both courses had proved relatively successful in recruiting women from the latter group, although Asian women were less well represented on either of the two courses. In fact there were no Asian women on the building services course, and only two on the technology course.

Open to unemployed women over 25, no specific entry requirement was stipulated other than an expressed interest in the areas each course respectively covered, and a commitment to complete the training they offered. Designed to incorporate a total of 30 trainee places, the TEC manager responsible for co-ordinating both courses, suggested that between 70-80 initial enquiries had been made about each at the open days which preceded their presentation. In addition, the tutor co-ordinators on each course suggested

that enrolments tended to exceed the trainee places available by around 30%.

In addition to the free training which each course offered, trainees received a training allowance equivalent to unemployment benefit plus the extra £10 paid to ET trainees. Assistance with child-care support was also provided, in addition to help with travel expenses. This took the form of a bus pass which gave participants free bus travel on a week-day basis.

Each course ran over a year period, and comprised of three components. The first component involved taster options in the respective specialist areas which each course covered. This feature provided women with the opportunity to sample the various areas covered by the course prior to making a decision to follow training in one of these specialist vocational areas. In the 'Access for Women into Building Services' initiative, trainees took tasters in electrical installation, heating and ventilation, and refrigeration and air conditioning, before electing to undertake specialist training in one of these fields. The second component of the course followed on from the first, and involved the provision of specialist training in the areas which trainees had elected to follow. The third and final component of the course involved a 12 week work placement.

The 'Access for Women into Technology' was based on a similar design. It included tasters in Information Technology, Programming, and Media Technologies, with trainees opting to

specialise in one of these areas during the training and work-placement components of the course. The successful completion of these three components on both courses resulted in the award of City and Guilds qualification.

Interviews with some of the participants on both of the initiatives[2] suggested a variety factors had influenced the women's decision to take part. Most frequent amongst these were instrumental considerations relating to the potential it was seen to provide in terms of expanding the forms of employment which might be open to them and/or to improve their earnings potential. For instance, one of the women on the building services course had previously been self-employed as a painter and decorator, and felt that the course would enable her to expand on the services she might be able to offer future customers. In this way she hoped to boost her income when she re-entered self employment.

Most of the participants on both courses were aiming to return to paid employment after a period of absence which had, in most cases, been prompted by care commitments. In the majority of cases this related to child-care commitments, although one trainee on the technology course indicated that her exit from the labour market had been prompted by elder-care commitments.

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[2] . These interviews were organised on a group basis. 9 women participated within the group interview with respect to the Technology course, with a further 8 women being included within the group interview which related to the Building Services course. The dynamics of these group interviews tended to preclude an in-depth investigation of the class back-grounds of participants. However, insights interviewees provided into their previous employment backgrounds tended to suggest most were working class.

Women trainees on the technology course suggested their decision to take part had been prompted by a variety of reasons. In some cases, a desire to up-date skills which they had prior to leaving the labour market were cited. In addition to, or in tandem with this, some trainees suggested that their decision had been prompted by wanting to try something different and/or as a bridge out of domestic routine and isolation:

> [Being at home is] all right when the kids are young, lots of things to keep you on the go but when they're at school and you're just waiting for 'em , that's when it hits you….You try getting a job but no one'll give you the time of day because they reckon you're not qualified or whatever, any kind of job that pays decent….I'm doing this [Building course] because I've always been practical, anything round the house needs doing it's me because me husband's useless, can't even change a fuse!
> (Trainee #1, Building Services Course).

> I worked in a bank before I had the kids, before they went computerised …Its like that everywhere now, everywhere you look , so you really need to know about [computers].
> (Trainee #1, Technology course).

> Not really seeing anybody from one day to the next was the worst bit. I went from being out all day to being tied-down, first with my Mum and then with my Mum-in-Law…I didn't mind …[but] what happens is you lose touch with everything else and then you don't know what to do…I'm doing [this technology course] for the contact… [but also] because I wanted to make a fresh start, something I hadn't done before, maybe surprise myself.
> (Trainee #2, Technology course).

Whilst not specifically targeted towards women, 'Mainstream's' 'Saturday College' initiative, open to women and men, both inside and outside employment, was said to be disproportionately utilised by women. Based on a voucher system negotiated with two local further education colleges, which involved the requirement of Saturday opening, vouchers could be traded in as either part or whole payment for the courses they operated. The take-up of this scheme was

estimated to have involved over a 1,000 people, with one of the TECs managers suggesting that women constituted around 75% of the participants who used the facility it provided to gain access to further education. One of the reasons for such a high female take-up was indicated by the TEC's initial evaluations of the scheme. These evaluations tended to underline the benefits which its female participants in particular seemed to emphasise with regard to its timing. This point was indicated by the manager responsible for co-ordinating the scheme:

> A lot of participants were interviewed and the feed-back was that participants, women particularly, found that Saturday was much easier for them than a night-school, domestically. They found they could make better domestic arrangements. And also, what hadn't dawned on us at the time, women were much more comfortable about safety. They didn't like the idea of going to night school, going across the city in the dark winter nights... [so] to come to college on a Saturday in the day was a much more attractive prospect.
> (Middle Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

The final project which 'Mainstream' had funded related to development work with employers aimed at promoting an awareness of equal opportunities with respect to women in employment. Involving a pilot project which involved the TEC contracting with a local equal opportunities consultancy firm, the initiative involved targeting three local companies, in order to facilitate processes by which they might be able to develop the potential of their current female employees and also enhance their recruitment of women in the future.

Negotiations with respect to which three companies were to take part in the project had only recently been finalised at

the time of the research. All three were large enterprises. Two were in the areas of engineering and transport, and were characterised as traditionally employing a predominantly male workforce. It was suggested by TEC management that these companies had been selected on the criteria of having an equal opportunities policy but who had also acknowledged they had done little to implement it. One of the TEC's senior managers indicated the rationale which had informed the project, and its intention to disseminate findings from the three case studies to other employers within the area, in order to contribute towards a model of good practice upon which they might draw:

> We decided try to help employers make a reality out of their equal opportunities policy. A lot of them may say 'we've got an equal opportunities policy' but do bugger all about it. We wanted three employers who had made a commitment, but were frank enough to say they needed help [because] we wanted some positive case studies we could disseminate...We are now going to be working with those [companies], working on their recruitment policies where they are still recruiting, so that women are properly attracted and encouraged to apply...also on career progression, how they might help women to progress up the ladder in the company. [So] it also recognises that equal opp's doesn't just stop at recruitment, it's also about the glass ceiling, helping women advance in those companies.
> (Senior Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

A more detailed exploration of the project was precluded by the fact that it was in the early stages of its development. Nevertheless it is perhaps important to note that 'Mainstream' TEC was the only one of the three case study TECs found to be engaged in targeted efforts to promote a wider awareness of equal opportunities issues with respect to women and employment amongst employers, and the need for such awareness to be translated into action. In this sense it was unusual insofar as it appeared committed to promote

change on the demand side of the equal opportunities equation, by recognising the need for change on the employer's part, in addition to the efforts it was making with regard to the supply-side of the equation with respect to the training it co-ordinated for women.

SUMMARY AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

This Chapter has attempted to reveal the differences which existed between the three TECs studied with regard to how women were represented within the various types of training they co-ordinated. It has identified a tendency for each TEC to attach a different level of priority to the promotion of greater training opportunities for women within their respective operational remits. This has been complemented by the insights of some of the women who took part in initiatives which the three TECs specifically targeted towards women.

The importance of these initiatives was apparent. Nonetheless, these initiatives were limited by a number of different factors. They were, for example, relatively small in scale. The tendency for some of these initiatives to exhibit a middle-class bias was also found to be problematic. Furthermore, whilst the second initiative which 'Dedmain' co-ordinated did aim to extend the training opportunities which were available to economically disadvantaged women, it seemed that the limited progression routes it offered to such women were likely to remain circumscribed by the inter-play of class and gender inequalities. In noting these and other limitations, the discussion can be said to have further

problematised the wide variation which existed between the three TECs with respect to the range of provision each co-ordinated in this regard, and in terms of the efforts each was taking to expand women's training opportunities within the YT and ET they respectively co-ordinated.

'Mainstream' TEC exhibited the most pro-active response to expanding women's training opportunities within its operational remit. Nevertheless it argued that its efforts in this regard were in tension with the funding and priority criteria which Government had imposed. This point was also noted within the discussion of 'Token' TEC. That such tensions were not evidenced by 'Dedmain' can perhaps be seen as an artefact of the low priority it attached to the issue of expanding women's training opportunities within its activities.

Despite these tensions, it appeared that 'Mainstream' TEC was committed to expanding women's training opportunities as a longer term strategic project. This was evidenced by the relatively wide range of initiatives it had currently inserted within its operational remit, and planned to implement in the following year of its operations. The apparent commitment of 'Mainstream' in this respect, and the rationale which informed this, was explicitly articulated by one of its Senior Managers:

> We have sustained and will continue to sustain and develop our women-only provision, We don't say there are no jobs and therefore cut-back.On ET we're trying to increase qualification levels because that puts women in a better position when the job market comes round again than having nothing at all at the end of it. That's why we think that work with employers, working with them to

> make a reality of their equal opportunities policies is so important. You are addressing those in employment, and that starts to change the mind-set of employers...[also] if and when things start to improve economically, then you are starting to create the right climate within that company for more open and fairer recruitment.
> (Senior Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

However the extent to which this perspective was shared by either of the other two TECs studied was more questionable. Whilst currently co-ordinating a small range of initiatives targeted towards women, it emerged that 'Token' TEC was likely to reduce its budget for such initiatives, which currently stood at £75,000, by 50% in the following year of its operations. Moreover, as noted above, its plan to extend the limited sampling facility it offered within YT had been suspended in light of financial considerations. These developments were thereby likely to further circumscribe the already limited training opportunities it offered to women.

The opportunities which 'Dedmain' TEC currently offered to women, and planned to offer in the near future, were even more limited. As noted above, 'Dedmain' had indicated the presence of only two initiatives targeted towards women. One of these was very small in scale. Furthermore, this TEC provided no opportunities for participants on YT or ET to sample training in non-traditional areas prior to committing themselves to a particular programme. The TECs management also indicated that it had no plans to institute such a facility in the near future. It further emerged that it had no current intentions to target any initiatives towards women in the following year of its operations. As a corollary, and cognisant of the negative implications that surrounded its

intention to limit the payment of child-care allowance to only those groups included within its ET guarantee, it seemed that it was likely to offer less opportunities to women in the following year of its operations than it did currently.

So as to consider some of the factors which informed the different levels of priority which each of the three TECs expressed to expanding women's training opportunities, Chapter Eight takes as its basis an exploration of the different ways in which each had attempted to represent and support the promotion of greater opportunities for women at an operational level within their internal organisations. In tandem with this, and in cognisance of the tendency towards 'slippage' with both 'Dedmain' and 'Token' exhibited with respect to prioritising women's training needs within their respective operational remits, the discussion also aims to provide insights into the inter-play of internal and external factors which informed this.

CHAPTER EIGHT

REPRESENTING AND SUPPORTING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AT AN INFRA-STRUCTURAL LEVEL

INTRODUCTION

The importance of placing and securing commitments to promote equal opportunities at the highest level of organisational structures has been well established (Cockburn, 1991). With specific reference to assessing the commitment and potential of TECs to promote greater equality for women within the training they co-ordinate, the efforts they have taken to recruit women at board level, and the extent to which these and the other appointments they have made in this respect can be seen to have secured a commitment to promote initiatives aimed at challenging women's inequality within their operational remit, therefore represents an important area of investigation. Exploring these and related questions around the varying degrees and forms of structural support each of the three TECs studied manifested in this regard, this chapter aims to illuminate the internal structures and processes which can be said to have contributed towards the differences reported in the previous chapter with regard to the training which each currently co-ordinated for women, both inside and outside their YT and ET remits.

The differences which each TEC exhibited in the above respects will be examined alongside a consideration of the impact that these, and other factors around their organisational 'reach', suggested with regard to their links with the wider population of employers located within the areas they each covered. On this basis, some tentative insights into their respective potential to influence employers with respect to developing greater opportunities for women in training and employment will also be provided. In tandem with this, and in cognisance of the tendency towards 'slippage' which both 'Token' and 'Dedmain' TEC expressed in relation to expanding women's training opportunities, an effort will be made to illuminate the interplay of internal and external processes which seemed to have conditioned these developments.

'MAINSTREAM' TEC: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AS AN ORGANISIONAL WIDE RESPONSIBILITY

Overview

'Mainstream' TEC was committed to locate a responsibility to promote equal opportunities for women at all levels of its organisation. It had attempted to represent and underpin this commitment at various levels of its organisation. Ranging from the criteria which had informed its recruitment of board members through to its operational structures, it had also implemented three Equal Opportunity Sub-Board Groups, one of which was specifically mandated to promote greater opportunities for women in training and employment. Aiming to indicate the role that each of these played in

shaping the relatively high level of priority which 'Mainstream' appeared to attach to expanding women's opportunities within the training it co-ordinated, in comparison with the other two TECs studied, this section also attempts to illuminate some of the limitations which potentially impeded its efforts in this regard.

Board Composition

The recruitment of board members had explicitly been informed by a desire to signal its commitment to equal opportunities. These efforts by 'Mainstream' TEC had, at a numerical level, proved relatively successful, not only with respect to gender but also in relation to reflecting the presence of the area's ethnic minority population. A total of three women were located at board level, one of whom had been drawn from the area's Afro-Caribbean population. The board also contained a further two male ethnic minority directors, one recruited from the area's Asian constituency and the other from its Afro-Caribbean community. With only one exception, all of the female and ethnic minority directors had been recruited from outside the private sector. This feature was partly explained in terms of the difficulty the TEC had experienced in identifying such representatives within the private sector at levels of seniority sufficient to qualify for inclusion at board level.

The appointment of more than two women at board level, together with the efforts it had made to represent the area's ethnic minority community, rendered 'Mainstream's' board somewhat atypical, given the general tendency for white

males to overwhelmingly predominate on TEC boards. Moreover, while the appointments 'Mainstream' had made in this regard constituted the main strand of non-employer representatives at board level, its further appointment of the Chief Executive from the area's City Council, meant that it had exercised the discretion it had been given by Government to recruit the full one-third non-employer representation which Government restrictions allowed. This was a discretion which, as noted above, TECs have in general appear not to have exercised.

'Mainstream' TEC was informed by a desire to represent itself as an organisation which not only aimed to promote the business drive, but which also aimed to balance this against the needs of those who might become marginalised within such a drive. The decision to incorporate the maximum number of non-employer directors which Government constraints allowed, and to make efforts to include female and ethnic minority representatives within its board structure as a whole, was a distinctive feature. This was elaborated upon by the TECs Chief Executive:

> We wanted [the board] to say equal opportunities is a very critical element of what we do, to signal the whole issue of equal opportunities... we have been very careful as a TEC, very mindful that in the drive to meet labour market needs, that you don't lose sight of special needs: women, ethnic groups, the disabled, within that strategy.
> (Chief Executive, 'Mainstream' TEC).

The non-employer directors played an important role in promoting an awareness of issues around equal opportunities at board level. The Chief Executive indicated that he felt that this was not only informed by the balance of interests

and diversity of backgrounds such members brought to its board, but was also conditioned by the levels of expertise which some of these directors were able to contribute as a result of their previous background and interest in equality work. One of its female directors, for example, had had experience of managing equality initiatives for women as part of her senior level employment in the voluntary sector, whilst one of its male ethnic minority directors was a member of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE).

The Chief Executive saw such contributions as enhancing the 'learning curve' of directors who might have had less direct experience of equality work. This point was further underlined by one of its female non-employer directors who, whilst noting the tendency for its non-employer directors to raise equal opportunity issues, nevertheless went onto indicate the willingness of its employer directors to support the need for action in this respect:

> There's a very strong non-employer side [on the board], and we always advocate the case for equal opportunities, whether it be women, disability or the ethnic case... I would say that the main inputs, the [equal opportunity] drive comes from [the non-employer] side although [one employer director] is very interested in disability and chairs the disability group... [But] that doesn't mean that equal opportunities falls on deaf ears on the employer side because they have embraced the need for targeted action, maybe because of [non-employer directors] input ...and maybe because they recognise that in a multi-cultural, multi-community city like this, that you need to make these kinds of investments.
> (Non-Private Sector Board Member, 'Mainstream' TEC).

This view was supported by one of the 'Mainstream's' employer directors insofar as he provided an impression of a board which was broadly committed to supporting equality initiatives. He acknowledged the value that accrued from the

breadth of experiences and backgrounds represented by it non-employer representatives, and suggested that this resulted in a more pro-active role on the part of its employer side. However he also argued that his experiences of being a Managing Director in a large engineering firm had in itself facilitated his awareness of the need to promote equal opportunity initiatives. Ironically, this was an awareness which, on his part, had been sparked by actions taken against his firm a few years previously by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE). Nonetheless, he went onto suggest that such an awareness of the need to promote equal opportunities was something which he thought applied to some of 'Mainstream's' other employer directors:

> [The board] has got very broad representation...women and ethnic minority backgrounds but on [the employer side] there are people like myself who are large employers and have a knowledge of the issues...[My company] got taken before the CRE, quite rightly, for passive but in fact not very factual discrimination...Recruitment, for years, generations in fact had gone on the basis son of, brother-in-law of, and so it was total status quo from a racial and sexual point of view, and the nature of work tended to be very heavy...You're not trained to stop and think about these things, it was very embarrassing. It was a white male macho scenario and it just carried on. That was part of my learning experience. We got done over very heavily and had to take action, start looking at recruitment, not just racial but from a sexual point of view...What you find is that, certainly with large firms, there are common problems and transferable solutions... [It's] good to have the broad representation but I would say [the employer side input] is also good. (Private Sector Board Member, 'Mainstream' TEC).

An interest in promoting equality projects was thus relatively secure at board level, even if different perspectives existed with regard to which directors provided the main impetus for this stance. Nonetheless, the potential for the TEC to disseminate this apparent commitment to employers in general, and more specifically to the large

number of small firms located within the area it covered, was rendered potentially problematic by the tendency for representatives from large firms to predominate at board level, and to a lesser extent, within the various sub-board level employer sector groups it had created.

With only one exception, all of 'Mainstream's' 10 employer directors had been recruited from large firms, the rationale for which was indicated its Chief Executive:

> There is the local perspective, you want it to reflect the area but you also want to use [board] members as a signalling method. If you look at our board, most employer members are heads of large companies which have national or international profiles. They are very high profile people who are saying, 'I'm committing my time and energy to the TEC because I believe this is the way to go'.
> (Chief Executive.)

Describing the TEC's role in broad terms as an 'agent of change' which aimed to facilitate a 'pro-training culture' amongst all local employers, this characterisation of the TEC by its Chief Executive was questioned by one of 'Mainstream's' middle managers. In her view, the potential for it to promote such a culture, and relatedly, to make the case for equal opportunities within this, to large and small employers alike, was not clear cut. Referring specifically to the composition of its Employer Sector sub-board groups, she argued that whilst tending to contain a larger representation of small employers, large employers nevertheless constituted the majority voice. The potential problems that this generated with regard to small employers being less able to identify with the TEC suggested a cautionary note. By way of reinforcing this, she went on to indicate the particular limitations which working with small employers were seen to

pose to the TEC, both with respect to promoting training developments and equality initiatives:

> One of the problems I think is that large firms can relate to us more …[Also] it's more difficult with small firms because they tend to think more about the short-term view… [and] they're more likely to go out of business , so you might be making some progress and that happens…With large firms there's more scope for development and progression.
> (Middle Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

Equality Sub-Board Level Groups

In line with its apparent commitment that social groups such as women and others which it perceived as having 'special needs' were not marginalised within its 'drive to meet labour market needs', 'Mainstream' TEC had implemented three Equal Opportunity (EO) Groups at sub-board level. This had involved the formation of a Women's EO Group, in addition to two other EO groups, which respectively related to ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

One of 'Mainstream's' Senior Managers explained the rationale which had informed its decision to implement EO groups within its sub-board level organisation. She underlined the potential tension which the TEC perceived between promoting the area's labour market drive, whilst at the same time safeguarding the interests of those groups who might be subject to disadvantage within such a drive. In doing this, this manager indicated that the creation of the 'Mainstream's' EO sub-board structures had been prompted by a desire to achieve a balance between representing the interests of employers, who were defined as the TEC's 'customers' on one hand, and its trainee 'client' groups on

the other, and more specifically its 'disadvantaged client' groups. According to this manager the insertion of these EO Groups was seen as an essential balance to the Employer Sector Groups it had implemented at sub-board level, the latter of which, as noted above, had been established to safeguard the labour market drive within the TEC. She thus argued:

> We established these [EO Groups], as a sort of balance, if you like, to the other side of the argument, the Employer Sector groups, the customer side...Within our labour market strategy, we wanted to make sure that all client needs were represented, and that those that were disadvantaged, that sufficient actions would be taken to try and help them.
> (Senior Manager).

These groups were tied into the board by the inclusion of at least one board director, who, in the case of the Women's Equality Group, also acted as Chair. 'Mainstream's' management suggested that each of these EO Groups contained a broad membership of interested individuals and community representatives. This was confirmed with respect to the Women's Equality Group. Thus the Chair of this Group indicated that in addition to containing a couple of personnel managers from two of the areas large firms, it also included representatives from the Women's Unit of the City Council, the Bureau of Voluntary Services, and a female senior manager from the City's Social Services Department.

In addition to playing an advisory role with respect to the board, each Group had been awarded an annual budget in the region of around £50,000 in order to finance development initiatives. In the case of its Women's EO Group, all of these funds were currently being used to fund pilot projects

aimed at facilitating the processes by which employers could more effectively translate equal opportunities policies into practice (a project which was discussed above in Chapter Seven).

The potential problems that single identity focused equality groups pose in terms of generating initiatives which only address one strand of the disadvantage traditionally marginalised groups might experience has been well noted (Cockburn,1989, 1991). The tendency for such approaches to generate initiatives which, for example, address the inequalities which women, as a unitary category, are perceived to experience has therefore been acknowledged. The problem with such targeting is that it may involve a limited appreciation of the different needs which specific groups of women exhibit. Relatedly, the potential failings of such approaches to address the way in which other identities around disability and ethnicity can over-lap with gender identity in ways which may compound sexual discrimination has also been noted.

It appeared that 'Mainstream' TEC had taken steps to address such weaknesses within its EO strategy. Providing insights into why the TEC had implemented three targeted Equality Groups, as opposed to opting to include one with a general remit to cover all three areas, one of its Senior Managers indicated the rationale behind this. She further indicated the steps it had taken to safeguard against the potential for fragmentation which its decision in this respect might have

represented:

> We didn't want [one] Equal Opportunities sub-group because everything would have been lumped into the same pot and then all the issues would have been blurred...we wanted a more segmented approach. It's not just women, it's sub-targeting within disadvantaged groups, addressing the needs of particular groups of women or particular ethnic minorities, particular forms of disability...But what you have to do is get together with the other Equal Opp's Groups, because many of our aims and strategies are similar and also, it's about sub-targeting again, to ensure collaboration so you can address the particular needs of say ethnic minority women who might have particular needs, particular ethnic minority women.
> (Senior Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

The need for such cross-group collaboration had thus been identified in order to facilitate more effective forms of sub-targeting. The channels by which collaborative projects could be generated had been formalised and cemented within meetings which contained representatives from each of the three EO Groups. The Chair of its Women's EO Group indicated that these cross-over meeting were held on a bi-annual basis. She further argued that the ideas generated by these twice yearly meeting had played an important part in suggesting some of the cross-over projects the TEC had, or aimed to implement. This view was supported by one of the TEC's senior managers, who cited the TEC's plan to implement an initiative aimed at targeting Asian women home-workers (referred to in the previous chapter) as an example of one outcome generated by such cross-group collaborations.

Equality Staff[1]

Eschewing the decision to employ a staffing resource dedicated to the promotion of equal opportunities from the onset of its operations, the TEC had instead opted to assign generic responsibility for the areas covered by each of its EO sub-board level groups to three of its Senior/Sector Managers. This was the final tier of its effort to mainstream responsibility for the development of EO within its organisation. This tier represented a facility by which to 'pull together' the different levels of EO input which existed within the TEC, and to feed these into the sectoral side of the TECs operations via the overall responsibilities which each Manager had with respect to managing a series of sectors. This facility was formally represented by the participation of each of its three Senior/Sector Managers within the EO groups which respectively covered the interest areas for which they had each been assigned generic responsibility. In tandem with this, all three Senior Managers were formally tied into the cross-group EO forum which the TEC had instituted on a bi-yearly basis, which, as noted above, had been implemented in order to promote more effective EO sub-targeting within and between the interest groups which each represented.

The TEC's commitment to adopt a mainstream approach to equal opportunities had initially provoked concern on the part of some of its staff. These concerns seemed to turn on the

[1] The descriptor 'equality staff' is used broadly here, and below, in order to refer to staff whose role involves a specific and formally encoded responsibility for EO, which may or may not be defined as their primary role within the organisation. This broad definition was necessary in order to encompass the varying ways in which each of the TECs had sought to represent EO within their executive structures.

threat of EO being placed on the periphery of the TEC's agenda. One of the TEC's senior managers indicated the way in which his previous employment within the Civil Service prior to moving to the TEC as a manager of a dedicated equality team within a Training Agency Area Office had led him to share these fears about how the TEC might develop. However, on reflection he stated that his concerns in this respect had not been justified. He then went onto positively compare the TEC's record on EO with that of the Training Agency:

> The TEC said straight from the beginning that they didn't want a dedicated team, they wanted [EO] to be mainstreamed, that everyone should take responsibility for it...At the [Training Agency] Area Office there was an Equal Opp's team which I headed up so we were concerned about this because we felt it was a sign that Equal Opp's wasn't going to be recognised or taken seriously by the TEC. Especially at the time, because TECs were very new to us and there was a lot of talk about the hard nosed business approach and that that was what TECs were all about. I had a very genuine fear that Equal Opp's would come a very poor 2nd /5th place and so almost didn't apply [to the TEC] but I actually think that what 'Mainstream' is achieving out-strips what we were doing in the Area Office and I was one of those most concerned about [mainstreaming] at the beginning... Because it has been mainstreamed it's everyone's responsibility, and everyone has and takes that responsibility and there's more resource that is actually being targeted ...At the Area Office it was always on the periphery, you were always hassling your colleagues to do things because it wasn't an automatic part of the work they did.
> (Senior Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

Although expressing a relatively strong internal commitment to expand the opportunities of women within the training it co-ordinated, the potential for this to act as a lever for change within the wider employer population it covered was possibly impeded by the limited links which 'Mainstream' had with the area's small employers. However a further and perhaps more fundamental limitation was found to centre on

the reliance the TEC placed on making the 'economic' case for extending women's employment and training opportunities. These limitations were particularly apparent within the context of the recession the area was experiencing.

One of 'Mainstream's' senior managers argued that her personal commitment to EO extended beyond recommending it as an economistic strategy by which employers might develop the skills potential of groups traditionally marginalised within the labour market, as a means of expanding the pool of labour upon which they might be able to draw. She nevertheless emphasised the imperative which was perceived to exist with respect to representing EO to employers in these terms:

> No matter how much you really want them to support equal opp's as social thing, or how much as an individual you might feel that they should not discriminate, not be sexist or racist, all my experience says they're not persuaded. .. it's very important, all the time, to keep making the business case to employers about recruiting women.
> (Senior Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

Further underlining the tendency for the TEC to represent the 'economic case' for EO to employers, one of its middle managers indicated the ethical dilemma which she felt to characterise this, and the problems it posed with regard to safeguarding the promotion of greater equality for those subject to discrimination in the context of recession. She drew attention to the way in which such economic imperatives became muted in the short-term:

> In terms of equal opportunities, the way people try to sell it is that 'this makes good business sense , women are a wasted resource etc.' Sometimes I find that quite a hard approach because what you are actually saying is that we're running out of white able-bodied men, but there are a lot of women, a lot of black people, people with disabilities so perhaps you can take some of those.

> And it's very hard...and the recession comes along and you can't use that approach or its very difficult.
> (Middle Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

Another member of management contrasted 'Mainstream's' commitment to promote greater opportunities for women as part of the TEC's long-term operational agenda, with the external implications that the recession was seen to represent with respect to masking training and skill needs in the short-term. In noting this, she nevertheless conceded that the latter had impacted on some of the projects 'Mainstream' had initially planned to develop in conjunction with local employers. Elaborating on this, and the changing economic context against which it had been played out, she cited one example which had involved 'Mainstream's' efforts to develop a Child-Care Trust. This development had been planned in order to cushion against the child-care costs which female trainees with children were likely to incur when entering employment after completing their training period:

> When we first became operational at the beginning of 1990 it was very much a period of boom, jobs and skill shortages, which a lot of people were talking about at the time. That has vanished. The recession has hit [the area] and people aren't recruiting. It was interesting because at that time we were doing a joint venture with the City Council on child-care. We were looking to establish a Child-Care Trust. Because we were finding whilst we were developing our child-care support for trainees, there would be a drop off the end if you go into a job and still have high child-care costs to meet. So we were looking to develop a sort of progression from training to employment, where we would pay initially, then there is a period in the middle where the employer would pay and then finally ease onto the employee themselves with some employer support. To make it easier to combine these funds we established a Child-Care company and we had a feasibility study done but by the time we got to that stage recruitment was slowing down to virtually non-existent in some areas and employers said 'we are not interested now because it isn't an issue for us. If you'd asked us this time last year we would have been very keen because we foresaw great recruitment problems and would have wanted to widen our recruitment to make sure women were encouraged

within that. But that isn't the case now so we don't feel the need to do anything about targeting them now'. (Senior Manager, 'Mainstream' TEC).

Summary

'Mainstream' exhibited a relatively strong internal commitment to promote greater opportunities for women. This was a commitment expressed both in terms of the range of initiatives it co-ordinated and the various mechanisms it had inserted within its organisation to safeguard and develop such substantive commitment. However the potential for this commitment to be used as a lever for external change appeared to be limited by two factors. The first limitation related to the seemingly tenuous links which 'Mainstream' had with the area's small employers. Second, and more fundamentally, the efforts which it had made in this regard were inhibited by the tendency for employers to perceive the development of greater opportunities for women as contingent upon economic need. This was a perception which tended to reduce the priority they attached to the issue in the context of recession.

'TOKEN' TEC: LOCATING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ON THE PERIPHERY

Overview

Although 'Mainstream's' potential to generate initiatives geared towards combating the factors which contribute towards women's labour market inequality can be seen to be circumscribed by its reliance on making the 'economic' case for developing EO for women, the implications of such reliance were even more apparent within 'Token' TEC. Thus in addition to tending to construe EO as an economic strategy

within it's external operations, this rationale seemed to inform the internal priority it attached to the issue. This view, in tandem with the limited internal structures and processes which it had implemented to safeguard the promotion of greater opportunities for women within its operational remit, as will be seen below, had tended to render the pursuit of such objectives vulnerable in the short-term. It also raised doubts with respect to it's long-term potential in this regard.

Board Composition

Arguing that the selection of board members had been informed by three main criteria, the Chief Executive of 'Token' TEC indicated the first of these related to its desire to represent the three relatively distinct geographical areas which fell within its boundary. The second and third criteria related specifically to its recruitment of directors from the private sector and involved an attempt to represent the industrial and commercial interests within the districts it covered, and within this, to include representatives from different sized enterprises.

The employer-side composition of the board comprised a total of 10 members, the spread of which seemed to be more representative of the different sized enterprises located in the area than had been apparent in the case of 'Mainstream' TEC. This may have resulted in an increased opportunity to promote a pro-training culture amongst the area's employer population in general, by dint of the possibility that they might have felt more able to identify with 'Token' TEC.

However, the likelihood of inserting a commitment to promote greater opportunities for women within this seemed more questionable, given that the internal commitment which the TEC exhibited to this issue seemed far from secure.

Equal opportunity considerations, as a factor in the composition of the board, was described as a 'sub-criteria' in board selection. This was construed by the Chief Executive in terms of the 'need to represent, from an equal opportunities point of view, the male/female balance'. This had resulted in the appointment of two female directors, both of whom were from small firm backgrounds. In addition, whilst not overtly mentioned with regard to promoting equal opportunities, it emerged that one of 'Token's' non-employer directors, recruited from the voluntary sector, had a keen interest in issues around disability, and tended to advocate the case for more training provisions for the disabled within the board. In addition to this latter appointment, the TEC contained a further two non-employer directors, respectively recruited from the area's County Council and its Local Education Authority.

The total membership of 'Token' TECs board thereby comprised of 13 directors in total. Of these, only 3 were non-employer representatives. This meant that their percentage representation on the board fell short of the maximum which Government constraints would potentially have allowed. The TEC's Chief Executive argued that its non-employer members had been recruited as a balance to the employer-side. He suggested they had been appointed in order to 'represent

[the area's] social and democratic organisations'. However, the extent to which 'Token' TEC was committed to such a balance appeared not only to be undermined by the relative under-representation of such members on its board in comparison with 'Mainstream' TEC, but also seemed to be queried by the way in which its Chief Executive, in somewhat contradictory terms, went on to characterise the role of the TEC:

> We are not democratic, we're a limited company. Without TECs, it was businesses that were marginalised, business is actually the one that generates the money, business provide the social benefit so you have to get the balance right…What TECs do is [to] refocus on business….because you can't have the social benefit if business goes down, like [in] recession, quite reasonably we have to concentrate on key things to keep things going until things start to pick up again. (Chief Executive, 'Token' TEC).

He suggested an apparent tendency to privilege the business drive in shaping 'Token's' priorities. This tendency was underlined by the sub-board structures it had implemented, which, as noted above, were organised on an area basis and which were comprised wholly of employers. Thus in contrast to 'Mainstream' TEC, which had regarded the insertion of three Equal Opportunity Sub-Board Groups as an essential balance to the representation it had given to employers at this level of its organisation, 'Token' TEC apparently saw no need for such a balance.

In addition to not implementing Equal Opportunity structures at sub-board level, it appeared that the various appointments made within the board itself had done little to secure support for developing greater opportunities for women within its operational remit. Although the TEC had appointed two

women on the employer-side of its board, it appeared that neither these, nor the other employer appointments, had provided a facility by which initiatives for women might be advocated at board level. Thus while acknowledging that the numerical representation of women within its board was relatively good in comparison with some other TECs, 'Token's' only female Senior Manager, whose responsibilities included developing initiatives for women in tandem with her primary responsibility for managing the TEC's YT and ET Department, argued:

> We have 2 women on our board, which is quite good compared with other TECs ...[but] the women haven't taken much interest in [equal opportunities]. They're both business people and are interested in other things, the same with the other business people.
> (Senior Manager, 'Token' TEC).

In support of this observation, an interview with one of the two female employer directors on its board suggested a lack of commitment on her part to support initiatives specifically targeted towards women. Elaborating on her own experiences of running a small business services enterprise which had initially only employed herself and her husband, but which had expanded to employ a staff of around 18, she extolled the virtues of individual effort, irrespective of gender concerns and circumstances. This view engendered a degree of scepticism about the value of targeted action:

> I actually think you get out what you put in, the opportunities are there if you're prepared to work at it but you have to be realistic, which is where I think a lot of people fall down. If that happens, if people aren't realistic then I don't think it helps anyone to turn around a say 'Oh you poor thing, you need our help'....If someone did that to me I'd feel insulted and I am sure I'm not alone in that, most people would feel the same...I actually think it's insulting to say you need help because you're a woman or whatever because that has never been my experience.
> (Private Sector Board Member, 'Token' TEC).

Furthermore, it appeared that the appointments 'Token' had made on the non-employer side had done little to secure a commitment to promote initiatives for women either. The TECs female Senior Manager provided more detailed insights into the interests and priorities of the board. She further indicated the way in which the board's pursuit of one of these priorities operated to place issues around EO on the TEC's 'back seat':

> The board interest in education is very strong. Very high….[On the non-employer-side] we have the Chief Executive of the County Council, we have the Director of Education so anything to do with education is usually supported because of all the lobbying…Indirectly this has a negative impact on equal opportunities because it's the rationale that equal opportunities has to be placed on the back-seat.
> (Senior Manager, 'Token' TEC).

This apparent tendency for the board to place EO considerations on the 'back seat' would seem to beg questions with respect to the resources it had allocated to support the women's training initiatives within its current operations. Moving on to provide insights into this, and the inadequacy of the budget she perceived to characterise such support, the Senior Manager quoted above queried the extent to which this represented a long-term commitment to the issue on the part of the TEC. These queries appeared to have been confirmed by the decision which the TEC had taken to cut the resources allocated to women's initiatives in the following year of its operations. Arguing that she provided the main impetus behind the initiatives which the TEC currently co-ordinated for women, this manager elaborated:

> [The Women's] initiatives have come from me, and basically the money for those was given because of the

> publicity factor, because [the TEC] was very much into PR with Opportunity 2000 but the £75,000 I was actually given is actually very small beer. The money we are talking about for those initiatives is very small, its £2,500 here, £10,000 there, maybe affecting the lives of 100-150 women…[but]I could fill those places 3 or 4 times over….I'm anticipating a 50% cut in the budget available to women's initiatives next year, which is actually nothing to do with [the TEC's] overall funding level but will be a loss in real terms, because all the hype has gone and because women aren't seen as a drive for business.
> (Senior Manager, 'Token' TEC).

'Token's' Chief Executive confirmed that the TEC was planning to cut its budget for women's initiatives in the following year of its operations. At the same he dismissed the social justice case for developing greater opportunities for women in training and employment as a 'hearts and flowers' approach which had little credence on business agendas. He thereby rationalised the TEC's commitment to reduce the resources it attached to developing women's initiatives in the short-term in the following terms:

> The issue of women returners was right up on the list, a very high expectation and then the recession sets in. What we do is use some of the [TECs resource for women's initiatives] because we know the recession will finish and the situation of women returners will have to be built up, to maintain perhaps lower levels of expectation but not completely bottom out.
> (Chief Executive, 'Token' TEC).

However while suggesting that economic recovery might herald an expansion and development of the initiatives it targeted towards women, it emerged that the main opportunities which such recovery was anticipated to generate for the majority of women returners were likely to be delimited by gender-stereotyping. Indicating a somewhat limited interpretation of the opportunities which the TEC might be able to offer women returners more generally when the area's anticipated emergence from recession occurred, he went on to recommend

the merits of the training and skills brokerage system which 'Token' TEC had implemented. This involved a service through which, as noted in Chapter 6, the TEC gave support to employers in assessing and administering to their training needs. The Chief Executive argued the advantages this represented not only for the TEC and local employers, but also in terms of the putative benefits he perceived it represented for groups like women returners:

> The customer [employer] gets a good product, we pay the supplier and we make a [profit] margin...This system will work dramatically in favour of women because we do anticipate skill shortages are going to reoccur and we are going to get to a stage where we haven't got enough people. If we get this system working and without wanting to stereo-type characters, but I will, women and key board skills, then you are likely to get companies in this area thinking to themselves, 'look, we are getting more and more demand and we are going to need 30 or 40 keyboard operators in the next month or two...[What] happens then when they think who is most motivated and traditionally associated with key-board skills - women...What we might do, from our profits, what we might need in this area when skill shortages start to come around is to promote women returners who don't fall into [the ET] category, so we can still say to [employers] if you take a woman on, and she's coming back to work, we'll also give you a £30 subsidy.
> (Chief Executive, 'Token' TEC).

This response underlined the degree to which the opportunities the TEC made available to women appeared to be contingent on factors around short-term economic need. Further, an integral feature of this approach turned on the gender stereo-typical assumptions which tended to underpin it. As a corollary, the potential of the TEC to contribute towards promoting greater equality for women in training in either the short or longer term seemed open to doubt. Reflecting the apparently low levels of interest which its board attached to the issue, this point was further underlined by the structures and processes it had implement

to safeguard the limited and essentially contingent commitment 'Token' currently attached to expanding women's training. In contrast to the approach manifested by 'Mainstream' TEC, which involved a three tier response aimed at securing the representation of EO concerns at board, sub-board and operational level, 'Token' TEC's efforts in this respect turned wholly on the assignment of responsibility for promoting women's initiatives to its only female Senior Manager. However, and by way of qualifying this commitment, this manager's main responsibilities, as noted above, also included overall responsibility for managing the whole range of the YT and ET training the TEC co-ordinated.

Equality Staff

Whilst acknowledging that the priority which the TEC attached to expanding women's training opportunities had diminished in response to the impact of recession, its Chief Executive was nevertheless keen to identify his assignment of responsibility to promote women's training initiatives to the female head of its YT and ET Department as evidence of the TEC's long-term commitment to the issue. However the extent to which this assignment represented a strategic commitment, and relatedly, the degree to which it had operated to secure the promotion of greater opportunities for women within the TEC's operational remit, was contested by the Senior Manager responsible. Noting the way in which the TEC had failed to incorporate any means by which to develop initiatives for women prior to her appointment, she went on to indicate the rationale which she felt had informed its decision to assign responsibility for the issue to her, and more specifically,

to locate it within the least well resourced Department within the TEC:

> [The responsibility for women's initiatives] was given to me because I'm a woman. I came to [Token] about three months after it became operational and the chap that did this job before didn't have this responsibility for women. There was no focal point for women until I was appointed....If you look at the structure of this company, we have 4 Departments. Mine is the smallest but I actually manage the biggest budget, YT and ET account for about £10 million out of a total £14 million budget. As well as YT and ET, I have responsibility for women's initiatives and lead responsibility to monitor Equal Opp's but I have the smallest staff [at the TEC] ...Basically my part is seen as the very unsexy part, YT, ET and women are seen a very unsexy, not attractive so they all get lumped together.
> (Senior Manager, 'Token' TEC).

This manager moved on to indicate the limitations which circumscribed her own position within the structure of the TEC. In doing this she argued that this position militated against safeguarding even the limited priority the TEC currently attached to promote women's employment and training initiatives:

> As a director of operations I have some power, buying power, and I have a passion for Equal Opp's but you have also got to have people with voting power on the board, voting power and a passion for Equal Opp's. Without that, what you get is drips [of money for women's initiatives], £75,000, 0.02% of the [TECs] budget, which is going to be cut soon.
> (Senior Manager, 'Token' TEC).

Whilst the limited power-base associated with the way in which EO was represented within its internal organisation had implications with respect safeguarding the initiatives it specifically targeted towards women, the under-resourcing of its YT and ET Department was found to have further implications with respect to its EO monitoring of YT and ET. This Department was responsible for the full range of the YT and ET programmes co-ordinated by the TEC. As part of this,

the Department had a broadly defined monitoring responsibility, which included assuring that training providers complied with the Sex Discrimination Act.

However, the YT and ET Department was, as noted above, the smallest of the four in the TEC. Moreover, EO was only one of many factors which its staff monitored, and was not regarded as the most important of these factors. Their monitoring of attendance records and NVQs achieved was, for example, seen as a greater priority for the TEC because its funding was directly related to these features. This, in tandem with staff limitations, seemed to have engendered a mechanistic response to its EO monitoring of training providers. Moreover, in elaborating on this, one of the middle managers in the Department implicitly suggested that such a mechanistic response was facilitated by the relatively low priority with EO had within the TEC's contract with Government:

> [There is] a small team who visit training providers but we tend to be so bogged down checking attendance records and pieces of paper and evidence of the NVQ. We have quarter topics and this quarter it's EO amongst other things but it's a case that it has to wait because there are so many things that we need to do to justify the contract, like attendance records, NVQ certification … All our [training] suppliers have to have an Equal Opp's policy which they have to produce before we contract with them but it's just a matter of ticking it off, saying 'right, they've produced an Equal Opp's policy, they've produced their Health and Safety policy, their financial accounts show they're viable, that's the number of NVQs they want to achieve.
> (Middle Manager, 'Token' TEC).

Summary

The board of 'Token' TEC expressed little support with respect promoting the development of greater opportunities

for women within its operational remit. The implications of this seemed to be apparent within the limited mechanisms it had inserted within its organisation to develop and safeguard such provisions, and to promote wider opportunities for women within its YT and ET. As a corollary, the extent to which 'Token' TEC promised to expand women's training and employment opportunities in either the short-term or longer terms seemed debatable.

Appearing to construe EO as an economic strategy, this response was reflected within the internal structures and processes of the TEC. As a result, the priority which 'Token' attached to promoting greater training opportunities for women was rendered contingent on short-term economic need. It was this factor which informed the TEC's decision to reduce its funding of women's initiatives in the following year of its operations. Furthermore, when the business drive for including more women within the training it co-ordinated was strengthened by the recovery from recession it ultimately anticipated, it seemed likely this would be mediated through pervasive processes of gender stereo-typing. There seemed little doubt that these processes were likely to be reflected and reinforced within the bulk of the training which the TEC co-ordinated.

'DEDMAIN' TEC: MOVING FROM A DEDICATED TO MAINSTREAM APPROACH TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND THE POTENTIAL FOR ECLIPSE?

Overview

'Dedmain' TEC was the only one of the three TECs studied to have employed a dedicated equal opportunities staffing team. 'Dedmain's' decision to do so seemed to signal a long-term commitment to secure and support the representation of EO within its operations. However the paradox in this policy was that 'Dedmain' currently co-ordinated the smallest number of initiatives targeted towards women. This, together with its decision to disband the team just over a year after it had been implemented, in favour of a mainstream approach which lacked any substantial mechanisms to safeguard such an approach, raised questions with regard to the priority it did attach to promoting greater opportunities for women within its operational remit. Moreover, as will be seen below, these questions tended to be underlined by the low priority which its board seemed to attached to EO. This was a level of priority which appeared to have circumscribed the role of its EO team during its limited life-span, and which also seemed to have informed one strand within 'Dedmain's' decision to disband the team.

Board Composition

The size of 'Dedmain' TEC's board had fallen to eleven members by the interview stage of the study, although it had initially comprised of a total of fourteen directors. This contraction involved the withdrawal of one employer director from a large multi-national company, who had only rarely

attended board meetings during his association with the TEC, and another employer director whose withdrawal was prompted by the collapse of her small business. The final resignation had come from a trade union representative on its non-employer side, who had moved elsewhere and was therefore no longer able to play a part in the TEC.

This left the board with an employer-side representation of nine directors, three of whom were from small firms. The two non-employer directors were representatives from the area's Local Authority and City Council. Like 'Token' TEC, 'Dedmain's' board composition, both at the time of the survey and at the interview stage, had therefore exceeded the minimum of two-thirds employer representation which Government stipulated. In addition, the withdrawal of the small employer referred to above, who had represented the only woman on the board, and, it emerged, the only ethnic minority member it had contained, meant that its board was comprised wholly of white males.

Faced with questions about the efforts it had initially taken to appoint women and ethnic minority members at board level, the TEC's Chief Executive suggested that it was attempting to appoint at least one women and one representative from the area's ethnic minority population as replacements for the resignations it had recently received. However even if successful in this regard, the pattern of representation it would exhibit was still likely to fall short of that demonstrated by 'Mainstream' TEC.

The interests reflected on its employer-side also tended to raise concerns with respect to how representative it was of the area's overall employer population. Although containing a mix of small and large employers, the ties which three of its employer directors had with the same large car manufacturing enterprise effectively narrowed the representative base of the TEC. Thus two of its employer director were managing directors employed at different sites of this car manufacturing enterprise, whilst a third small employer director had close business links with the same enterprise. The extent to which the employer-side of its board was representative of local employers thereby seemed doubtful. This feature might possibly have reduced the potential for local employers to identify with the TEC.

The extent to which these or the other appointments it had made with respect to its employer-side had operated to secure a commitment to promote initiatives targeted towards women within its board was refuted by one of its non-employer directors. Suggesting that the non-employer directors tended to provide the main EO input on the board with respect to both women and ethnic minority groups, the director appointed from the area's Local Authority indicated that their ability to translate these concerns into action was restricted by what he characterised as the tendency for its employer directors to express 'traditional hard-nosed business' attitudes. Emphasising the problems this generated with respect to the ratio between employer and non-employer directors within 'Dedmain's' board, he suggested a tendency

for EO concerns to be placed on the periphery of the board's agenda:

> Coming from [a Local Authority] background which promotes equal opportunities, where its a documented part of your culture you find yourself [on the TEC board] amongst a significant majority of employer representatives, [who are] of an attitude , they don't say it, but the short-hand speak is, 'Oh God, all those bloody activist groups, we can do without that'… Equal opportunity concerns are raised but because [non-employer] directors are the minority, they tend to left out there (uses hand to indicate distance), in the car park so to speak.
> (Non-Private Sector Board Member, 'Dedmain' TEC).

This perspective was supported by one of 'Dedmain's' ex-employer directors, an Afro-Caribbean woman who had, as noted above, constituted the board's only female and ethnic minority member. In interview she suggested she had been particularly interested in supporting initiatives targeted towards both women and men within the area's Afro-Caribbean community. However, she argued that although she had experienced no problems in raising these concerns, gaining support for them was another matter:

> There were a few board members who had a awareness of equal opportunities, racial and sexual discrimination… But , more from my [the employer] side, I would say, on the whole it was not a priority …It was the interest thing, getting enough interest to do something was a problem….It just wasn't seen as a natural thing.
> (Ex Private Sector Board Member, 'Dedmain' TEC).

Appearing to acknowledge a degree of resistance to supporting equal opportunities initiatives within its board, 'Dedmain's' Chief Executive suggested that the problem which confronted the TEC in this respect centred on 'seeking to increase awareness without becoming shrill'. Eschewing the formation of EO sub-board level groups, the upshot of which was that its sub-board level representation hinged wholly on employer groups, its initial efforts to raise awareness of EO

within the organisation had pivoted on the appointment of a dedicated EO team which, as noted above, it had subsequently disbanded.

However it emerged that some of the strategies which its members had deployed during the EO team's limited life span to raise awareness of EO at board level had been perceived by at least one of its employer directors as neither positive nor shrill. These measures had included the provision of EO training for board members, as well as arranging guest speakers from organisations like the CRE to give presentations to its directors. However for this small employer director, it seemed that such strategies were defined as largely irrelevant to the activities of the TEC.

Ascribing the promotion of equal opportunities as an exercise in being 'nice', an interview with this employer director indicated that he perceived EO was not what business was about, and therefore should not be something to concern 'Dedmain' TEC. After expressing his reaction to some of the strategies which its equal opportunities team had deployed in their efforts to raise the boards awareness of equal opportunities, he went onto imply a disjucture between this and the issues which he felt should and did pre-occupy the board:

> I came in a few months ago to be interviewed for two hours about [discrimination], to be educated and I thought that was it, but no that was the preamble to assess what I knew so I could go on a course about it. I said 'ruddy hell', it's the frustration of it… In the end you think 'Oh bollocks'... .The bird [the Commission for Racial Equality speaker] who talked to us who said 'there's a problem about, y'know, racial discrimination' and I said 'where, where's the problem? They're more

> racist than we are', I don't have any time for this ….If you talk to our chairman he'll probably tell you different, the jargon that it's a learning process and their looking at how they recruit people, looking at race and sex but you get him over a gin and tonic after a meeting and ask him what they're doing [at his large manufacturing firm], ask him about discrimination and what you'll get is , 'We're going to lose X 1000's of [workers] over the next decade, so who gives a bollocks about discrimination'…It might not be nice and it might not be right but if you shovel through the bullshit…half my time's spent shovelling the marketing jargon bullshit here, and they know it's bullshit, that's what you'll get because business isn't about being nice …[and] TECs are about supporting business. (Private Sector Board Member, 'Dedmain' TEC).

Whilst perhaps representing an extreme response, this perspective in concert with those outlined above, can nevertheless be said to evidence a tendency for EO concerns to be under-represented within 'Dedmain's' board. Perhaps informing the low priority which it attached to co-ordinating initiatives targeted towards women, given that it currently co-ordinated the smallest number of such initiatives than either of the other two TEC's studied, this would seem to beg questions around the role and level of support given to its EO team, and the factors which informed its ultimate disbandment.

Equality Staff

The equal opportunities team was established when Dedmain had first became operational. It had comprised of three staff members, respectively assigned responsibilities for women, ethnic minority groups and people with disabilities. The Chief Executive claimed that the TEC's decision to appoint the team had initially related to its desire to develop its own EO policy, in order to replace that which it had inherited from the Training Agency, and to raise internal

levels of awareness within the TEC with respect to EO. He suggested that the team's completion of this policy had represented one factor which had prompted the TEC's decision to disband the team. Furthermore, he argued that this decision had emerged through a period of consultation which involved both senior management and members of the equality team.

In contradiction to the Chief Executive's analysis of the factors which had informed the TEC's decision to abolish its EO team, one of its Senior Managers implied that the team's disbandment had been prompted by a perception that the team had failed to elicit change with respect to external factors relating to the profile of participants within the YT and ET programmes it co-ordinated. This manager thus argued:

> Although the Equal Opp's team did some things internally they didn't change key things like black to white people, male to female, black people are still massively under-represented, ET is still a massively male activity…women into engineering.
> (Senior Manager, 'Dedmain' TEC).

Perhaps representing a rather unrealistic benchmark by which to assess the efficacy of the team, given its limited life-span and the largely internally focused mandate which the Chief Executive had suggested, the third rationale for disbanding the team appeared to turn on the potential for marginalisation which 'Dedmain's' maintenance of a dedicated EO staff was perceived to represent. Arguing that its limited life-span had suggested a facility by which other staff could abrogate responsibility for the development and provision of EO initiatives within their respective areas of activity, this concern was one which two of the EO team's ex-members

appeared to share. However whilst this represented an area of convergence between the TEC's senior management and the ex-members of its equality team, areas of divergence with respect to the factors which had informed its abolition of the team were also apparent.

Arguing that the work of the team had been dogged by under-resourcing and a lack of senior level support, the ex-equality staff member whose responsibility had related to women provided insights into the problems she had encountered in persuading the board to support initiatives targeted towards women. She also explained why the team had opted to use some of its limited resource in order to co-ordinate equal opportunities training for board members:

> When you've got a board of predominantly private sector individuals, men who have probably not come into contact with a lot of these issues, then it's difficult to say we need £x for women's initiatives because they would tend to say 'well why? I don't understand that. It's not the TECs role' or whatever. So we wanted [EO training for the board] so they would be in tune, so that when things were taken forward to the board, they would know why.
> (Ex Women's EO Officer, 'Dedmain' TEC).

Suggesting that the board had tended to see EO as a 'gun being held to their heads', another ex-member of the team, an Afro-Caribbean women whose remit had related to ethnic minority groups, argued that some of the means by which the team had sought to raise levels of awareness amongst board member, like EO training, had engendered unease amongst some. This was an unease which she saw as representing one strand within its decision to abolish the team. Elaborating on this, and also querying the extent to which its team members had been consulted within the decision making processes which

led up to senior management's decision to disband the team, she argued:

> [The board] sort of see EO as a gun being held to their head even when you approach it softly, softly, don't know if that's right or wrong [but] in a business like manner. '[EO] makes good business sense'. Not from a moral angle because I don't think the moral angle works at all well in this setting... Things like [EO] awareness raising training, [from the] private sector but sometimes the public sector because sometimes I think they just want to appear to be taking a stronger role on EO type issues, I think some of the [board] felt ' this is taking it a bit far'... Nothing was said formally but informally I think it was there in the decision... [I]n actual fact the decision [to disband the team] had already been made so it was like leading you through all the processes to make it feel as though you had made the decision or shared in it... We were sort of being taken along to make it look like 'well isn't it better if it's mainstreamed'.
> (Ex Ethnic Minority EO Officer, 'Dedmain' TEC).

Tending to confirm this perspective with respect to the way in which team members seemed to have been led through, rather than having been genuinely consulted within the TECs decision to jettison a dedicated approach to EO, the ex-equality staff member previously responsible for women suggested a further dimension which she felt had informed the TEC's decision in this regard. She noted that the team's abolition had represented one strand within a wider and on-going restructuring process which the TEC was undertaking geared towards making it more responsive to customer/ employer needs. In this respect, the team's completion of the TEC's EO policy had provided the trigger for its abolition. Locating its decision in this regard against the wider context of deepening recession which confronted the area, the rationale she suggested seemed to resonate with that which had informed the declining priority which 'Token' TEC appeared to have

attached to expanding women's training opportunities:

> The feeling of the board and senior management was that ['Dedmain'] now had an Equal Opp's policy and so the team... there was no reason for the team anymore and the feeling was that we could be better used in other areas... [Also] women, women-returners are no longer seen as a burning issue, so why have staff working specifically on that... So there was a feeling that [as a TEC] we needed to move on... the push for that was couched in 'it's a reorganisation of the TEC so it could compete and maintain a cutting-edge', to use all the key phrases, '[compete] out there in the market place'... And it was decided we had clients on one hand, which are people actually in or wanting to enter the labour market and we had customers, on the other, which are businesses... To do a matching of those two it was decided we needed to focus more on business and enterprise. So it was justified in terms of getting the TEC into a structure [in] which to target our customers/[employers].
> (Ex Women's EO Officer, 'Dedmain' TEC).

The extent to which concerns to promote greater equality for women and other groups subject to labour market inequality was likely to be represented within this approach seemed open to question however. Although its jettisoning of a dedicated approach to EO in favour of a mainstream approach was said by senior management to have been informed by a strategic decision to make EO an organisational wide responsibility, it had inserted few mechanisms by which to guarantee the fulfilment of this responsibility.

The extent to which its board, as a whole, appeared to have been convinced of the importance of supporting targeted EO initiatives was debatable. Likewise, while there was a suggestion that one strand of its new EO policy had related to setting targets in order to increase the representation of women in non-traditional areas within YT and ET, it was also the case that these targets remained in-house and were not passed onto training providers and employers. Moreover the

means by which such internal targets might be achieved, in light of 'Dedmain's' apparent reluctance to offer sampling opportunities and its general commitment not to target training specifically towards women, seemed unclear. Thus while expressing an awareness of the tendency for employers' recruitment strategies to be informed by processes of gender stereo-typing (a point noted in Chapter Seven), 'Dedmain' appeared reluctant to introduce initiatives within its operational remit geared towards challenging these.

Furthermore, an interview with one of the TEC's staff in its YT and ET Department, whose responsibilities related to monitoring EO, along with other criteria mapped around those undertaken by 'Token' TEC's YT and ET staff, suggested the probability that its monitoring of training providers and employers with respect of EO was likely to exhibit the mechanistic approach which 'Token' had reported. When asked to elaborate on the way in which 'Dedmain' attempted to monitor EO within its YT and ET training, this staff member referred to the TEC's requirement that providers and employers had an equal opportunities policy. However reference to this was simply included within a long list of other requirements it monitored, which included Health and Safety policies, number of NVQs anticipated and so on.

In shifting to a mainstream approach to EO, 'Dedmain's' interpretation of this effectively inverted the logic which had informed the efforts which 'Mainstream' TEC had taken to safeguard its internal commitment to promote greater opportunities for women within its operational remit. It

thereby seemed that 'Dedmain's' mainstream approach to EO, in the absence of such mechanisms, potentially hinged on (mis)placing its faith in the labour market drive to deliver greater equality for groups traditionally marginalised within such drives.

Two ex-members of 'Dedmain's' equality team referred to above supported this conclusion, in different ways. They both expressed reservations around the TEC's decision to adopt a mainstream approach to EO. Querying the extent to which it represented a strategic commitment on the part of the TEC to safeguard the promotion of greater equality for traditionally disadvantaged groups within its organisation and operational remit, they further indicated the factors which they perceived to delimit its response in this respect. Arguing that she felt the TEC's disbandment of the EO team had been premature, the ex-equality worker previously responsible for ethnic minority groups, went on to suggest:

> [The team] was disbanded during the process of [EO training] . Personally I think it would have been better to keep at least one EO officer in place to see it through and if I'm honest I think it would have been better in the long run to keep [the team]... I have this dilemma. By having an equal opp's team people can hold up their hands and say, 'oh, were good, we've got this team' even if the organisation doesn't do much to support it, and there were elements of that here. And I think it also enabled managers to say as soon as anything came in that vaguely looked EO, 'right, let [the EO team] deal with it, it's nothing to do with us'. So people don't take EO on board which I think is dangerous... On the other hand, I feel that by mainstreaming EO, it can get lost. You have an [EO] policy but it isn't implemented and I think that's the danger here because its still something where people say 'it's nothing to do with us'...We still get [EO] things passed onto us, which says it all really. So when you pass it back, you can't help feeling it's going to get lost.
> (Ex Ethnic Minority EO Officer, 'Dedmain' TEC).

This view was supported by the second ex-equality worker interviewed, who argued that the TEC's mainstream approach to EO potentially promised 'words' rather than 'actions'. In noting this, and the way in which such a response reflected the internal dynamics of the TEC, she further argued that such internal dynamics were themselves mapped around and facilitated by the low priority which the Government had attached to EO within its contracting process with the TEC. The implications of this policy was something which she felt extended to other TECs:

> In our contracts with the Employment Department, there is no sense in which we are really monitored on [EO]. Well that's not quite right, we include it in our business plans, our reports back to Government - how many women, how many black people participating in the training we co-ordinate, but there is no real feeling, in this TEC at least, and I don't think we are alone in this, that our contracts would be withdrawn or that other sanctions would be taken if we were found to be falling behind or failing on EO. We are mainly assessed on a cost basis, how efficiently we fund and organise the training we co-ordinate.
> (Ex Women's EO Officer).

Summary

The extent to which 'Dedmain's' decision to shift from a dedicated to mainstream approach represented a strategic commitment aimed at securing the promotion of greater opportunities for women and other marginalised groups within its operational remit was questionable. Indeed, it seemed that its decision in this regard suggested the potential for the issue to slip even further down its agenda. Moreover, whilst the inter-play between the internal dynamics within the TEC and external factors around economic recession can be seen to have informed this response, the role of Government also seemed significant. This is a point which might also be said to apply to the approach by 'Token' TEC.

CONCLUSION

The focus of this Chapter has been on an exploration of the different ways in which the three TECs studied attempted to represent and secure a commitment to support efforts to promote greater opportunities for women at an operational level within their internal organisation. In doing this, it has emphasised the apparent need for such representation and support to be located at the highest level of TECs' internal organisations. It has further been suggested that a tension may exist between this, the employer-led nature of TECs, and the marginalisation of other groups that this represents. This is a marginalisation which appears to have been magnified by the tendency which both 'Token' and 'Dedmain' TEC exhibited with regard to exceeding the two-third minimum of private sector members at board level which Government required, and to implement sub-board structures wholly comprised of employer representatives.

Taking as its basis the apparent importance of locating a commitment to support EO for women at the most senior level of TEC organisations, it has been argued that without such senior level support, there is a danger for the issue to become located on the periphery of TEC activities and to become subject to economic contingencies. The implication of this is that the imperative for expanding women's training opportunities is likely to be made contingent on the tightness of the local labour markets which TECs cover. As a consequence, the priority which TECs attach to such concerns may diminish in the context of recession. This point can

perhaps be said to have been evidenced, in different ways, by both 'Dedmain' and 'Token' TEC. Moreover, the latter case in particular operated to illuminate the extent to which economic recovery and the re-emergence of skill shortages cannot in itself be relied upon to challenge gender stereotyping in training.

In addition, whilst such short-term responses to expanding women's training opportunities may be off-set to some extent by TECs which exhibit a strong internal commitment to promote greater equality for women in training, their potential is this regard would seem to be limited. This point was evidenced by 'Mainstream' TEC, which exhibited such a long-term and strategic response. For instance, its somewhat tenuous links with small employers potentially inhibited its ability to extend its commitment to the issue to employers in general. More fundamentally, its reliance on making the economic case for EO to employers with respect expanding women's training and employment opportunities rendered its potential in this regard somewhat vulnerable in the short-term. No longer appearing to be concerned with the immediate problems of skill and labour market shortages, the external purchase which the economic case for promoting greater opportunities for women seemed to diminish. As a corollary, some employers who might previously have collaborated on some of the equality projects which 'Mainstream' aimed to implement, instead exercised their voluntaristic prerogative not to contribute to such efforts.

Essentially setting the scene against which such tensions can be played out, it would seem that in its creation of TECs, Government is ultimately culpable. On one level this culpability can be said to hinge on the apparent triumph of ideology over rationality which its creation of TECs can be said to represent. However at a more substantive level, this culpability is evidenced by the perception that things other than EO take priority within the contracts which TECs have with Government. By failing to attach greater priority to the promotion of equality for women within its contracts with TECs, the Government thereby provides the conditions upon which such concerns can be located on the periphery of TEC agendas.

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this thesis has turned on an exploration of the commitment and potential of TECs to promote greater equality for women in training. The doing this, it has aimed to contribute towards filling an important gap in the literature on women and training, by focusing on the gender implications arising from one of the most recent and significant reforms to have been implemented in UK's training system.

As with any piece of exploratory research, this study has operated to generate insights into a number of important questions whilst simultaneously suggesting areas which warrant further investigation. In tandem with discussing the findings of this research, the discussion which follows will therefore also contain some reflections on the potential for further research which this study has identified. Finally, the chapter concludes by outlining a number of key recommendations arising from the empirical findings it reports.

THIS THESIS: PREMISES, FINDINGS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS GENERATED.

Two main premises contributed to the research focus of the study. The first was conditioned by an appreciation of the apparent importance of promoting greater equality for women in training. The second premise was informed by an awareness of the various tensions and paradoxes which the Government's creation of TECs represented with respect to realising such a project.

By way of underlining the former premise, the thesis explored the patterns of inequality which characterise women's position within the labour market, and the correspondence which exists between this and women's participation in training. Thus although the promotion of greater equality for women in training was not represented as the panacea to the forms of inequality which characterise women's position within the labour market, it was nonetheless suggested that such efforts represented an important strand within wider ranging gender equality projects.

Taking this as its basis, the thesis critically explored the potential which the Government's creation of TECs suggested with respect to challenging women's inequality in training. By way of prefacing this, the thesis sought to illuminate the factors which have shaped women's inequality in training and employment, so as to provide a more rigorous platform upon which to evaluate the potential of

TECs in this respect. This was approached via a critical evaluation of the various explanations which have been developed to account for patterns of gender inequality in training and employment.

Explanations developed by Human Capital theorists were found to be limited by the voluntaristic and functionalist forms of analysis developed. Further, whilst the explanations provided by Marxist accounts were found to address these limitations insofar as they contributed towards a more structuralist analysis, the tendency they exhibited towards privileging issues of class over gender was found to render them vulnerable to varying degrees of 'sex-blindness'.

By way of over-coming the limitations which Human Capital and Marxist explanations of women's inequality suggested, consideration was given to the analyses developed by dual-systems theorists. In doing this, it was suggested that the particular merits of the dual-system model turned on the way in which it explained patterns of gender inequality in terms of an inter-play between the sometimes conflicting processes of patriarchy and capitalism, as these are manifested within the labour market.

The inter-play between capitalism and patriarchy, and the strategies of gender exclusion and segregation through which this is articulated, was found to have generated a tendency by which women have traditionally been located on the periphery of the UK's training system. Operating to

challenge orthodox assumptions around the putative 'free-play' of market forces, this analysis thereby foregrounded the way in which gender difference represents a key locus of labour market inflexibility. Further, in posing such a challenge, the dual systems model provided a basis upon which to take issue with the rationale which informed the Government's creation of the TEC movement.

The Government's creation of TECs evidenced its apparent faith in an market-driven and employer-led approach to solving the UK's skill problems. Furthermore, the formation of TECs coincided with a period in which the need to promote greater opportunities for women in employment and training was increasingly stressed. This suggested an apparent prescription to the TEC movement which the Government explicitly articulated during the period in which TECs were created. This turned on the assertion that in tandem with their efforts to promote a pro-training culture, TECs should also make efforts to ensure that women's training needs were represented within such a culture. Suggesting that TECs should attach priority to expanding women's training opportunities, the extent to which this prescription was likely to be realised by TECs nevertheless seemed to be open to question.

In questioning the TEC movements potential to promote greater opportunities for women in training, a number of possible limitations were identified. The first related to their mandate to develop a market-led approach to training. This mandate suggested an apparent paradox, in that the

operation of market forces appeared to be complicit in shaping the very forms of gender inequality in training and employment which it was called upon to challenge. Relatedly, the Government's commitment to locate employers at the heart of the TEC movement suggested a further contradiction, given the far from pro-active stance which employers as a whole have tended to exhibit with respect to promoting equal opportunities for women in training and employment.

Furthermore, the disjucture which existed between the rhetoric and reality which underpinned the Government's creation of TECs suggested a further set of tensions. These tensions related to the way in which TECs were mandated to foster a 'skills revolution' on an increasingly diminishing funding base. Moreover, this funding base was primarily tied to the provision of YT and ET, training programmes for the unemployed which have tended to be dogged by reputations for offering poor quality forms of training. In tandem with this, such schemes have also been characterised by pervasive processes of gender stereo-typing, and by a tendency for women to be under-represented within the forms of training they offer.

When considered as a whole, the various contradictions which informed the Government's creation of TECs would thereby seem to represent a somewhat fragile basis upon which to build a gender equality project within the UK's training system. The findings of this study have tended to support this conclusion.

Training Co-ordinated

The study's questionnaire survey revealed wide variations between TECs with respect to the substantive forms of training they co-ordinated for women. For instance, although the majority indicated the presence of at least one training initiative specifically targeted towards women, only a minority of these suggested such provision involved the co-ordination of initiatives aimed at encouraging women to train in non-traditional occupational areas. Likewise, whilst noting the tendency for women on YT and ET to be concentrated in a narrow range of traditionally female forms of occupational training, only a minority of TEC respondents had inserted mechanisms aimed at challenging such processes of gender stereo-typing. Such findings question the degree of priority which the TEC movement as a whole attaches to promoting greater equality for women in training. In doing this, they underline the pervasive and entrenched nature of gender based patterns of segregation in the training which TECs coordinate, and the limited inroads which the TEC movement as a whole promises with respect to challenging such forms of sexual segregation in training, and the patterns of women's labour market inequality that these prefigure.

In addition, the differences which exist between TECs in the above respects effectively made the training opportunities which they offered to women subject to a national lottery scenario, the outcome of which turned on the degree of priority different TECs attached to

expanding women's training opportunities within the local areas they respectively covered. This point was reinforced and graphically illustrated by comparing the different forms of training each of the three case study TECs co-ordinated for women. Thus whilst 'Mainstream' co-ordinated a range of different initiatives aimed at increasing women's training opportunities, the provision which 'Dedmain' co-ordinated in this respect was of a much smaller scale and range.

The range of provision which 'Mainstream' co-ordinated for women was found to be significantly enhanced by the successful bids which it had made to the European Social Fund. In the absence of more national funding being targeted towards expanding women's training opportunities, such European funding represents a potentially valuable mechanism by which the TEC movement might enhance their operational remit with respect to promoting women's equality in training. Thus European funding enabled 'Mainstream' to co-ordinate women-only forms of training aimed at increasing their access to non-traditional forms of employment. This feature of 'Mainstream's' operations rendered it relatively unusual in that very few TECs were found to have utilised the facility which successful bids to the European Social Fund might have offered with regard to developing training initiatives for women in non-traditional areas.

In noting the important contribution which European funding made with respect to enhancing the range and scope of the

training 'Mainstream' was able to co-ordinate for women, further research geared towards assessing whether TECs as a whole have more lately sought to exploit the potential which such funding offers in this regard would seem to represent a valuable area of future investigation. A further and important dimension of such investigations might also turn on exploring the quality and form of training such European funding is utilised for. Thus if it is used by TECs to fund training for women in non-traditional areas of employment that are in decline, such provision is likely to promise a less positive outcome than that which is centred around equipping women with high quality skills in areas like technology.

In addition to providing detailed insights into the way in which women's access to training was mediated by pervasive processes of sex-typing, this study's research also provided some limited illumination of the interplay which existed between this feature and that mapped around class difference. Thus in illuminating the background of women taking part in a selection of the training which each of the three TECs specifically targeted to women, it was suggested that some forms of provision revealed a middle-class bias. This aspect was particularly apparent with respect to 'Token' TEC. This finding was necessarily tentative, given the selective nature of the data upon which it was based. However if such findings were found to have a wider resonance within the TEC movement more generally, it would suggest that working-class women were effectively losing out relative to middle-class women with

respect to the training opportunities TECs presented to women as a whole. In order to provide more systematic and rigorous insights into this important question, further research is called for. The focus of such research could turn on an investigation of the class background of women located within the various forms of training which TECs specifically target towards women. Such an exploration might also usefully be expanded in order to provide insights into the way in which identities mapped around ethnicity and other sources of differences might potentially interact with gender in order to mediate the participation which different groups of women manifest with regard to the training TECs co-ordinate.

The Inter-Play between Internal and External Factors

In tandem with providing more in-depth insights into the differences which existed between TECs with respect to the priority they attached to expanding women's training opportunities within the provision they co-ordinated, material generated by the case study stage of the research also illuminated some of the key internal and external factors which informed the differences which each TEC exhibited in this respect. With regard to the range and scope of the internal structures and processes implemented to support equal opportunities, it appeared that both 'Token' and 'Dedmain' TEC had located the issue on the periphery of their respective organisational structures. These approaches contrasted with that exhibited by 'Mainstream' TEC. This TEC was therefore distinctive in

that it had attempted to secure support for promoting women's equality initiatives at the highest level of its organisation. 'Mainstream' TEC had further sought to underpin this commitment at various other levels of its organisation. In noting this point of contrast, and the way in which it was conditioned by the respective board profiles which each TEC evidenced, a tension between securing such commitments to promote greater equality for women and the marginalisation of women and non-employer members on TEC boards was suggested.

Although the internal dynamics of each of the three TECs had implications with respect to the level of priority which each attached to expanding women's opportunities, the inter-play between this and external factors was also found to be significant. Thus in the case of both 'Dedmain' and 'Token' TEC, the impact of recession was seen to provide a rationale for not promoting greater equality for women within their respective operational remits. This effectively made the provision of greater opportunities for women in training subject to economic contingencies.

However the extent to which either of these two TECs promised a more positive training outcome for women in the longer-term context of economic recovery also seemed debatable. Thus, there appeared to be little doubt that the bulk of training they were likely to co-ordinate in such a context would be informed by pervasive process of gender stereo-typing. Confirmation of this can be seen to turn on the apparent reluctance which both expressed to

engage in wide-spread efforts to challenge such processes of gender stereotyping within the bulk of the training they respectively currently co-ordinated and planned to co-ordinate in the future. This would seem to raise doubts with respect to the extent to which economic recovery can be relied upon to provide a trigger by which the TEC movement as a whole would be persuaded of the importance of challenging gender based patterns of segregation within the training they co-ordinate. Thus even in the context of such a recovery, the gendered assumptions which informed the operational and organisational base of these two TECs, and the way in which these reflected and reinforced patterns of sexual segregation within the labour market, seemed likely to represent a significant barrier to long-term and comprehensive change geared towards challenging women's inequality in training and employment.

'Mainstream' TEC exhibited a longer term and more strategic commitment to promoting greater training opportunities for women within its internal operations. Nevertheless, this commitment seemed to be at tension with the instrumentality and short-termism which appeared to mediate the responses which local employers expressed with regard to supporting initiatives aimed at challenging women's inequality in training and employment. No longer confronted with the problems of skill and labour shortage in the short-term context of recession, employers thereby exercised their voluntaristic prerogative not to engage in collaborative projects with the TEC, aimed at promoting greater equality for women in the labour market. This feature underlines the

way in which even the potential of TECs which manifest a strong internal commitment to challenging women's inequality within the training they co-ordinate may be circumscribed by wider economistic concerns, such that collaborative equality initiatives were regarded by employers as optional 'add-ons' which could be jettisoned when skill and labour market shortages diminished.

In its creation of the TEC movement, the Government can be seen as ultimately responsible for generating the scene against which some of the various tension discussed above have been are played out. Ideologically committed to the putative free-play and inherent rationality of market forces, its attempt to solve the UK's skill and training problems has centred on an attempt to apply this ideological commitment within its creation of the TEC movement. Such faith in the ability of the market to contribute towards the skill formation of Britain's workforce as a whole has, in the past, been found to be fundamentally flawed. Furthermore, these flaws are even more apparent when concerns around women's equality are taken into account, given the way in which gender represents a key source of labour market inflexibility.

Moreover, some of the measures which the Government imposed on TECs, with respect to funding cuts and the introduction of out-put related funding, have been found by this study to have had both a negative impact on the quality of training trainees receive, and to have reinforced already pervasive processes of sex-typing in some of the training

TECs co-ordinated. These features, together the Government's apparent reluctance to underpin the priority which TECs attached to EO by making it a prominent feature within its contracts with TECs, can be said to have compounded the tensions which its faith in a market-led approach to training has generated, when viewed a gender equality perspective. In noting these and other features discussed above, the thesis can be said to have underlined the need for a reform of the TEC movement if any significant inroads into the problem of women's inequality in training are to be achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research can be said to have underlined the need for change at various different levels of the UK's training system, if women's equality in training is to be realised.

Mechanisms Geared Towards Challenging Patterns of Sexual Segregation in Training

At the substantive level of training provision, it would seem imperative that the processes of sex-typing which currently inform the bulk of training which TECs co-ordinate are challenged. Strategies geared towards encouraging women to train in non-traditional areas, such as 'sampling' have a role to play here. However in tandem with such strategies, and mindful of the way in which women trainees may themselves define certain occupational areas

as the conventional preserve of men and thereby effectively rule themselves out, more pro-active strategies might also warrant consideration.

One such strategy could turn on TECs providing financial incentives to women who enter non-traditional forms of training. This strategy would also need to be extended to male trainees entering non-traditional forms of training, so as to underline its rationale as an equality strategy. Thus in the absence of this latter feature, such a strategy might have the effect of further denigrating the status of some areas of employment which are traditionally dominated by women. In addition to such strategies mapped around increasing women's access to non-traditional forms of employment, the location and content of such training may need re-appraisal in order to facilitate more positive outcomes for the women concerned. Such strategies here might include women-only forms of provision and the construction of training syllabuses and time-tables which take women's lived experiences and commitments as the 'norm' rather than those of men. The perceived benefits which women trainees and training providers themselves acknowledge with respect to women-only forms of training in some non-traditional areas is something which this research has thus underlined. Similarly, the merits which more flexible forms of provision, dovetailed around the needs that women with child-care responsibilities may, for example, manifest has also been indicated.

However the changes needed at the level of provision are themselves predicated upon the realisation of more fundamental change. Further, such change is itself contingent on locating the issue of women's inequality in training and employment high on the political agenda in a real as opposed to rhetorical sense.

As this thesis has demonstrated, the Conservative Government was keen to express its commitment to expanding women's training opportunities within some of its rhetoric around the creation of the TEC movement. However, the findings of this research have operated to indicate significant discrepancies between this rhetoric and the reality which TECs represent in this regard. In order to more clearly delineate the source of these discrepancies, and the differing policies prescriptions these suggest, it is perhaps useful to distinguish between recommendations for change which turn on calls for relatively small-scale changes and those which require more fundamental change.

Small Scale Reforms

There are a number to things which the Conservative Government could do to improve the TEC movement's record with respect promoting gender equality in training, whilst remaining broadly within the ideological parameters which informed its logic for creating TECs. It could, for example, loosen the eligibility criteria around ET in such a way as to increase the access which groups like women returners have to the various forms of training offered by the scheme. Relatedly, it could jettison the double out-

come related funding criteria (which requires trainees achieve both a job and an NVQ rather than just the latter) it has imposed on TECs with respect to ET trainees who fall outside the ET priority groups defined by Government. This would remove the disincentive such funding criteria currently represents to TECs with regard to including groups like women returners, who tend to fall outside of the ET priority audience, within ET.

On a slightly more pro-active note, Government could reform the way in which outcome related funding is allocated to TECs so as to provide a positive financial incentive to TECs with respect to challenging the sex-typed training outcomes which currently characterise much of the training they co-ordinate. Such a strategy could be linked with setting targets, such that TECs which achieved positive training outcomes with respect to increasing women's participation in non-traditional forms of training would have their funding base increased relative to the success they had demonstrated in meeting such targets. This potential funding mechanism would also provide a mechanism through which TECs could also offer financial incentives to women trainees aimed at encouraging their entry to non-traditional forms of training; the merits of which were referred to above.

Government could also reduce the restrictive eligibility criteria it has imposed on TECs with respect to their board composition, with regard to both the two-thirds employer requirement and the senior level status of TEC board

directors. Such a slackening of the TEC board eligibility criteria in these respects might facilitate the recruitment of more women, and other interest groups who manifest a demonstrable interest and commitment to gender equality projects, to the highest level of TEC organisations. Some insight into the merits that such a strategy might represent with respect eliciting a more pro-active response to prioritising gender equality initiatives within TEC operations were provided by points of contrast arising from the this study's case study comparisons. Thus the priority which 'Mainstream' attached to supporting greater opportunities for women within the training it co-ordinated was, in part, found to turn on the efforts it had taken to incorporate as wide a range of interests groups with a demonstrable commitment to equality concerns within its board as the Government's dictates on TEC board eligibility criteria allowed. This feature of 'Mainstream's' organisation was found to contrast sharply with that manifest by the other two TECs, in which concerns around gender equality were found to be effectively marginalised at both an organisational and operational level.

Wider Scale Reforms

Although the relatively small-scale changes outlined above might operate to enhance the potential that TECs might potentially have with regard to expanding women's training opportunities, more fundamental changes which turn on taking issue with the Government's rationale for spawning the TEC movement are nevertheless also suggested by this research.

Whilst the devolved nature of the TEC project has potential merits which regard to promoting a more locally responsive and flexible approach to training and skill needs, the down-side of this is that it can foster an uneven patchwork of provision when assessed on a national scale. The upshot of this, from a gender equality perspective, is that the training opportunities available to women become subject to a national lottery scenario.

The above pitfall has been graphically illustrated by the findings of this research, in that the training which TECs co-ordinate for women has been shown to exhibit significant patterns of local variation. This finding suggests an apparent policy recommendation if such patterns of variation are to be challenged. Thus if such features are to be avoided, a more comprehensive and nationally accountable reform is called. In tandem with this, and given the tension which this study has suggested with respect to improving the quality and quantity of training which is available to women, and reducing training expenditure, the need for further public investments in training is underlined. Further, one source of such increased funding could be generated by imposing a training levy on employers.

In suggesting the case for greater public investment in training, the Government's logic in creating TECs is fundamentally questioned. The extent to which employers have historically operated to prioritise training at either

a general level or more specifically with respect to women, has been found to be highly questionable. By (mis)placing its faith in an employer-driven and market-led approach to training, so as to provide a rationale for the series of funding cuts it has imposed in this area, the Government has thereby generated the conditions upon which the skills potential of large segments of Britain's workforce is likely to remain untapped.

In order to combat the threats which the Conservative Government's creation of the TEC movement represents in the above respects, recommendations around the need for increased public investments therefore need to be implemented alongside of measures geared towards challenging the privileged status which Government has attached to the role of employers in shaping training policy in England and Wales. The need for a more democratic and participatory approach to training policy formation is thereby underlined which more fully represents the various stake-holders involved. Whilst this would necessarily involve employer organisations, it would equally require and recognise the importance of representation from trade unions and national equality organisations like the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality. Such forms of representation would provide a useful building-block with respect to constructing a more comprehensive, responsive and representative training system through which to channel training funds aimed at developing and implementing strategies geared towards challenging gender inequality in training. This approach

would potentially represent a more promising platform upon which locate concerns around promoting greater equality for women at the heart of the UK's training agenda than that which is currently presented by the employer-led, market-driven training system which the TEC movement embodies.

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